



**Gendered behaviour on social media:
Probing the role of Instagram in perpetuating
the curvaceous body ideal**

**Yolanda Lungile Mthethwa
212511281**

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

School of Social Science

Supervisor
Prof M Naidu

2018

DECLARATION

I, Yolanda Lungile Mthethwa, declare that this is my own original work and all the sources used are quoted and acknowledged by means of references.

I do declare that each significant contribution to and quotation in this thesis from the work(s) of other people has/have been attributed and has/has been cited as such.

This work has never been submitted to any other University or College.

Signature: *ymthethwa*

Date: 12/11/18

As the Candidate's Supervisor, I agree/ do not agree to the submission of this thesis

Name : Prof Maheshvari Naidu

Signature: *M Naidu*

Date: 12/11/18

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to all black women of every shape and size.

You are all different and beautiful in your own unique ways
and should unapologetically embrace this.

Women go through a lot to try and make themselves prettier
so that they can be approved of and appreciated by society.

But it all starts with you,
if you can love yourself enough and constantly remind yourself how beautiful you are,
no one can tell you otherwise.
You are a whole flame!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost I present my great appreciation to God for giving me so much love and grace, I am overwhelmed with gratitude. Sometimes I do not even understand how I got where I am, but He made it all possible. For being ahead of me every day and leading me Lord, thank you. May your will, be done.

To my Supervisor Prof Maheshvari Naidu, I believe God knew what he was doing when He made you my supervisor. I would have not done this without you, your trust and belief in my study on its own, meant the world to me. You went out of your way on numerous occasions to give your time, experience, resources, patience and academic expertise to ensure that my study and well-being were well catered for. You were always there, and I cannot thank you enough.

To my beloved gorgeous mother, where do I even begin? You have been my cheerleader, the love and support you have given me is out of this world, I know I could always count on you and you have always been by my side. Thank you for not giving up me, for not judging me and encouraging me not to give up. My father, whose dream is to see me as a doctor, your dreams push me to achieve mine. My grandmother, your love and support doesn't go unnoticed, thank you. My brother and all my family members, thank you for believing in me. My beautiful dear daughter, it has not been easy to do this Masters with you beside me, but your presence has pushed and I have grown in many aspects because of you. I thank God for you. Lungisa Makhanya, your love and support also doesn't go unnoticed, thank you for everything. Sbonelo Mthethwa, dear friend and brother, you basically dragged me to register for Masters, I did not think I was capable. Thank you also to all my friends for encouraging me. Thank you all so much.

I am also very grateful to all my research participants – thank you so much for your time and input in this study. Thank you to each and every person who contributed to this work.

ABSTRACT

The ambiguous messages conveyed by society through the media, particularly social media, have masked the extent to which such prescriptions and ideals harm and deter women from being their true selves. Internalisation of the media body ideal is an adoption of a socially defined body ideal as a personal standard (Knauss & Paxton, 2008). This qualitative study attempts to probe the role of Instagram in perpetuating the curvaceous body ideal. The study is built upon a social constructionism framework and black feminism theory. Deep and thick narratives were collected from young black women at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, ranging between the ages of 18 to 30 years and who are Instagram users. Findings reveal that participants are aware of the curvaceous body trend and to some extent are affected by the trend. Results also showed that some of the participants had a sense of pride in who they are and their uniqueness and did not feel the pressure to conform to the bodies seen on Instagram. The study revealed that the majority of the participants felt that peers of the same gender put the most pressure on women to look a certain way or to have body image concerns, either through social media or in person.

Keywords: social media, Instagram, curvaceous body, pressure, Black women

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	i
DEDICATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Preamble	1
1.2 Background and motivation for the study.....	4
1.3 Research questions	6
1.4 Research objectives	7
1.5 Survey of existing research	7
1.6 Structure of the dissertation.....	18
CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	20
2.1 Introduction	20
2.2 Research design	20
2.3 Sampling method	21
2.4 Research site	21
2.5 Target population	22
2.6 Data collection	22
2.7 Validity and reliability	23
2.8 Data processing and analysis	24
2.9 Ethical considerations	24
2.10 Limitations of the study	25
2.11 Theoretical framework	25
2.11.1 Social constructionism theory.....	25
2.11.2 Black feminist theory	26
2.12 Conclusion	27
CHAPTER 3: THE TRENDING CURVACEOUS BODIES ON INSTAGRAM AND THE EFFECTS OF THIS ON YOUNG BLACK WOMEN	28
3.1 Introduction	28
3.2 The curvaceous trend on Instagram	28
3.3 Participants' views on being trendy.....	28
3.4 'Body shaming'	34
3.5 Some Instagram examples of trendy bodies.....	39
3.6 Conclusion	41

CHAPTER 4: WOMEN’S PREFERENCES REGARDING BODY TYPES, SHAPES OR SIZES	42
4.1 Introduction	42
4.2 Socially constructed preferences	42
4.3 Participants’ body preferences	43
4.4 Probing the use of extreme exercise and diets to change body shapes.....	45
4.5 Conclusion.....	54
CHAPTER 5: PROBING THE CONSIDERATIONS OF SURGERY TO CHANGE BODY SHAPE AND COPY THE CURVY IDEAL SHAPE.....	55
5.1 Introduction	55
5.2 Cosmetic surgery.....	55
5.3 Participants’ views on cosmetic surgery	55
5.4 Complications and risks linked to surgery	59
5.4.1 The risk of infection leading to butt implant removal	59
5.4.2 The risk of butt implant malposition.....	59
5.4.3 The risk of experiencing intense pain after butt implants.....	59
5.4.4 The risk of capsular contracture, leading to butt implant removal.....	59
5.5 Conclusion.....	61
CHAPTER 6: THE BIGGEST CAUSE OF BODY IMAGE CONCERNS FOR YOUNG BLACK WOMEN.....	62
6.1 Introduction	62
6.2 Social media and body image concern	62
6.3 A male perspective.....	64
6.4 Participant perspectives on the effect of social media.....	65
6.5 Conclusion.....	69
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION.....	70
7.1 Introduction	70
7.2 Overview of literature review	70
7.3 Challenges	71
7.3.1 Limited literature	71
7.3.2 Methodological challenges	71
7.4 Critical overview of findings.....	72
7.4.1 Curvaceous bodies are trending on Instagram and this has an effect on young Black women	72
7.4.2 Women’s preferences regarding body types, shapes or sizes.....	72
7.4.3 Probing the considerations of surgery to change body shape and copy the ideal curvy shape	73
7.4.4 Causes of body image concerns for young Black women.....	73
References.....	75

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Preamble

Social media plays a significant role at both individual and organisational levels in modern society. With the rapid growth of communication technologies (e.g. Internet and Smartphone), it has become a central tool in personal lifestyles and organisational activities (Berstrom & Backman, 2013).

Social media can be referred to as a "group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of the Web and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (Van & Poell, 2013, p. 60). In simpler terms, social media can be defined as means of interactions among people in which they share, create and/ or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. Social networking is generally defined as a web-based communication platform that aims to connect individuals and develops social relationships (Wellman, 1996). It is even regarded as a form of habit because users tend to use it frequently or repeatedly (LaRose et al., 2011). These communities and networks include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, Flickr and LinkedIn (Faulds, 2009). "The quick rise of social media platforms in the first decade of this century was part of a more general networked culture where information and communication got increasingly defined by the affordances of web technologies such as browsers and search engines" (Van & Poell, 2013, p. 60). Social media keeps growing rapidly in user numbers and those who are already on board are very active on it. It has been claimed that teenagers as young as twelve have at least one social networking account (Endres, 2013). Given the prevalent use of social networking with no sign of abatement, this subject matter requires continual attention and assessment from a research viewpoint (Ting et al., 2015).

Instagram is a new phenomenon (it was founded in 2010) and can be regarded as a relatively recent social network site that is growing rapidly. It is a mobile application for Smartphone which is freely available in the Application Store (App Store) and Google Play (Bergstrom & Backman, 2013). Being mainly a photo-sharing application, Instagram has excelled as an effective communication and marketing tool to display products with visual descriptions. Hence, it becomes a useful instant social networking platform to individuals and companies. Moreover, the acquisition of Instagram by Facebook has potentially made the application more attractive and appealing to millions of users. According to the findings from the South African social media landscape study 2016 (based on access to consumer data from seven major social networks and a corporate survey conducted among more than a hundred of south Africa's leading brands), Facebook has grown by 8 percent, from 12 million to 13 million, and Twitter by 12 percent, from 6.6 million to 7.4 million. Video sharing platform YouTube increased its users by 15 percent from 7.2 million to 8.28 million. The biggest growth has come from Instagram, which rose a massive 133 percent from 1.1 million to 2.68 million (Duggan &

Smith, 2016). The big surprise in the results came from Instagram more than doubling its user numbers in South Africa.

According to Moreau (2017), Instagram is a social networking app made for sharing photos and videos from a smartphone. Similar to Facebook and Twitter, everyone who creates an Instagram account has a profile and a news feed. When you post a photo or video on Instagram, it will be displayed on your profile. Others who follow you will be able to see your posts in their own feed. Likewise you will see posts from other users who you choose to follow. Like other social networks, you can interact with other users on Instagram by following them, being followed by them, “commenting”, “liking”, “tagging” and private messaging. Instagram is generally known as a novel photo-sharing social networking platform (Chante et al., 2014; Salomon, 2013). Essentially, Instagram is a mobile-based application that enables users to take photos or pictures, apply the different manipulation tools to transform the appearance of images, and share them instantly with friends on different social networking sites (Hochman & Schwartz, 2012). Although the application was only launched in 2010, it has grown steadily and strongly. In 2013, it was estimated that Instagram had 100 million users worldwide, and approximately four billion photos were uploaded and displayed (Abbott et al., 2013). In a more recent estimation, it is reported that around 75 million people are using Instagram on a daily basis globally, and approximately 16 billion photos are uploaded and shared with other users (Smith, 2014).

According to Parker (2016), more women use Instagram than men, and young women dominate as they do in visual platforms in general. Similarly, Kimbrough et al. (2013) claimed that social media use is particularly popular among young women. This is one of the reasons that this study is focusing on women. Instagram reaches the younger generation and appeals to diverse societies more than other social networking services (Abbott et al., 2013; Salomon, 2013). It has been reported that youngsters today spend more time on Instagram than Facebook (Salomon, 2013). This is likely because young mobile users are extremely keen on taking photos using their mobile phones and sharing them with others instantly (Abbott et al., 2013). The sharing of images rather than words alone has made communication with friends and broader groups of users who share similar interests more ideal, convenient and fascinating (Bakhshi et al., 2013).

According to April 2016 data from Comscore, a company that measures Internet traffic worldwide, 42 percent of Instagram’s 108 million unique visitors were male, while 58 percent were female. Marwick (2016) argued that with most typical Instagram users, we see very conventional beauty standards, and it is this singular focus on appearance that seems to be luring women to Instagram. Marwick (2016) further explained that Instagram is attractive to fashion, design, and beauty brands, which are often trying to target women to buy their products and clothes. The site’s main social function is to share photos which are often enhanced through flattering built-in filters that do everything from intensifying shadows to making colours pop, places extreme emphasis on how things look (Marwick, 2016).

Instagram enhances online presence and identity, and allows more effective interaction not only for personal reasons, but also for business purposes (Abbott et al., 2013). Since it performs like a social media channel where individuals, companies, vendors and interest groups can easily join in, photos or pictures which are uploaded from any of them can be posted again, thus speeding up dissemination of information (Chante et al., 2014). Consequently, many traditional offline organisations have slowly incorporated social networking services into their businesses in order to reach and communicate with their actual and potential consumers more efficiently. Additionally, Instagram has also been found useful in other fields, such as academia (Salomon, 2013) and the medical industry (Chante et al., 2014). Advertising studies have revealed support that exposure to advertising with attractive models can temporarily raise comparison standards for physical attractiveness (Richins, 1991), enhance beliefs about the importance of attractiveness (Tan, 1979) and lower body satisfaction (Martin and Gentry, 1997). Photos on online sites can be carefully selected, enhanced and edited (Toma & Hancock, 2010). Indeed, studies have found that users attempt to enhance their physical attractiveness by selectively posting profile photographs and digitally retouching the photographic images on their online profiles (Manago et al., 2008; Toma & Hancock, 2010). Users also attempt to control their self-presentation by limiting or eliminating unflattering photos on social media sites (Lang & Barton, 2015). Instagram has many platforms that focus on everything such as promoting healthy bodies, women's thick bodies, healthy foods, hair, luxurious places, fashion, and good make-up, etc.; however this study focuses on the promoting of women's thick (curvaceous) bodies on Instagram.

Curvaceous women or what is also referred to as "thickness" on Instagram, has been trending on Instagram recently. The curvaceousness or "thickness" that is being referred to on Instagram is made up of normatively larger bottoms with relatively bigger buttocks and hips, large breasts and a tiny waist. Maryanne (2005) defined curvaceousness as the degree of "hourglass" shape as determined, for example by the size of the bust, relative to the circumference of the hips and waist, and the size of buttocks. Bahadur (2015) claimed that "thick" is a term used to describe a woman with nice, full thighs, round hips, a bubble butt, but who manages to have a slim waist and upper body. She is not considered to be fat or skinny, but a happy middle. Similarly, according to Adnan (2015), a "thick" girl (the word comes from modern black pop culture) is simply defined as a female with large buttocks, who does not have excess fat, but is not skinny either. There is no widespread agreement on the definition of a curvy body. Driessen (2016) added that the term is often used to describe an hourglass figure with a well-defined waist, wide hips and a proportionate bust, but it is also used as a euphemistic alternative for fat. Curvy can thus be used in a positive as well as a negative context. Curvy is also often linked to plus-size bodies, a term used in clothing stores and the modelling industry to describe women with clothing size 12 and up (Driessen, 2016). Always evident in the different definitions of curvy is that the body has distinct curvy shapes, such as breasts and hips that are bigger than average. In my analysis of the curvaceous body

ideal, I will mainly focus on the definition that links curvy to the hourglass shape as portrayed on Instagram. The plus-size body definition of curvy does not apply in this research.

According to Tovee and Cornelissen (1999), evolutionary psychology suggests that a woman's sexual attractiveness might be based on cues of reproductive potential. It has been proposed that the major determinant of physical attractiveness is the ratio between a woman's waist and hip measurements; for example, a woman with a curvaceous body with a waist-to-hip ratio of 0.7 is considered to be optimally attractive, presumably because this waist-to-hip ratio is the result of distribution that maximises reproductive potential. It follows that the preference for a curvaceous body shape in women should be universal among men and not be culturally based, because natural selection presumably favours cues indicative of the most fertile body shape. Similarly Fisher and Voracek (2006) argued that people prefer physical features that serve as cues of reproductive value, such as youth for women, which is based on the assumption that a young woman is presumably more fertile than an older woman. Fisher and Voracek (2006) stated that curvaceous women may also be associated with mating strategies. Curvaceous women, who are most attractive to men (Fisher & Voracek, 2006), can successfully marry to secure resources for offspring. According to Sherry et al. (2006), women who are minimally curvaceous are not as attractive to men and hence, must use alternative strategies, such as obtaining independent economic success. Increasing political and economic roles are said to put more pressure on women to be more concerned about their body image to emulate the dominant body image ideals expressed in the media, workplace and general society (Shonenye, Johnson, Steptoe & Wardle 2011, p. 539). This body image has become synonymous with success.

1.2 Background and motivation for the study

Not long ago thin bodies were considered ideal as depicted by mass media, especially regarding representation of women on television and pictures of models on magazines. "The thin ideal is portrayed as normative, desirable and achievable and these idealized images have been praised and rewarded as highly desirable examples of physical beauty" (Fouts & Burggraf, 2000; Wasyliw, Emms, Meuse, & Poirer, 2009). Scholars and researchers have argued that the media plays a central role in communicating and reinforcing the desirability of idealised body images (Kim & Chock, 2015). Several longitudinal studies have also provided empirical evidence that internalisation of the thin ideal is a significant predictor of increases in body dissatisfaction, particularly for girls (Jones 2004; Stice and Bearman 2001; Stice and Whitenton, 2002), although this relationship has not consistently been observed (Presnell et al., 2004). Most women wanted or desired and some still want and desire these ideal bodies. However, from my observation Black African women are challenging that notion as evidenced on Instagram and are embracing these curvaceous bodies.

According to Grabe et al. (2008) the "normative discontent" of aspiring to a thin ideal body has typically been explored in predominantly White sample communities. Black women's

bodies have for a long time been excluded from “normative” by the mass media because of the power of white supremacy – all other racial groups are depicted as “other”. Poran (2002) argued that emphasising societal standards of thinness as the ideal of feminine beauty can deny diversity in other cultural standards of beauty that can be potential sources of body dissatisfaction for women of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. When differences in body image perceptions between Black and White women are considered, studies have found that White women are adversely impacted by mainstream thin body ideals (Grabe et al., 2008; Schooler et al., 2004) but Black women appear to be “protected” from sociocultural pressures of thinness due to the cultural acceptance of shapelier or fuller body figures (Molloy & Herzberger, 1998). While it appears Black women have always desired and accepted their bodies as they are, there has not been a platform for them to embrace and celebrate their bodies; Instagram has become or may be that platform. But now these bodies are idolised and are potentially a new threat to body dissatisfaction. Body dissatisfaction is mostly related either to a desire to lose or gain weight or to be more muscular (Cohane & Pope, 2001; Smolak & Stein, 2006; Smolak et al., 2001; Ricciardelli & McCabe, 2001).

According to Grabe (2008), exposure to mass media depicting the thin-ideal body may be linked to body image disturbance in women. One may argue now, however, that exposure to social media depicting the curvaceous-ideal body may be linked to body image disturbance in women. Some women desire these curvaceous bodies to the extent of being willing to have surgery to change their bodies to fit the ideal. Some women simply buy panties with added buttocks in order to fit in. Some women have become dissatisfied with their own natural bodies and feel pressured to look the part. Overstreet et al. (2010) speculated that White women may also be affected by a curvaceous body ideal. Instagram even has a page for thick women only, namely “Thick Mzansi” – this page shows pictures of Black women from South Africa with thick bodies (big buttocks, big hips, a small waist and big breasts).

The present study looks at Instagram perpetuating thick/ curvaceous bodies (huge bottoms and tiny waist) as the norm/ ideal and how this is potentially causing body disturbance in women. In most previous research, thin bodies appear to be most idealised and desired. However, this research aims to explore this new normalised/idealised body that is trending on Instagram. The study is important since the use of Instagram is very new and growing rapidly: young women are very much engaged with it and are also easily influenced and fascinated by what they see on Instagram and are prepared to do whatever it takes to be part of what is considered the norm and idolised on social media. Already some women have become modified and famous Black American women who have started this trend, namely Kim Kardashian, Chloe Kardasian, Nicki Minaj, have lots of followers worldwide who look up to them and idolise their modified bodies. Haneen (2016) argued that the glorification of curvaceous-thick bodies arrived when rich, American celebrities decided these bodies were worthy of praise and attention – think Kim Kardashian and Kylie Jenner. Haneen added that

these celebrities have used plastic surgery, extreme diets, and waist trainers to achieve their looks. Dating back to the years of slave trade in America is the belief that western ideals of beauty and feminine behavior are superior (Swain, 2012, p.13). This influence may still continue as this newly idolised body also came with the Westerners.

As an Instagram user myself, I am fascinated by the lifestyle portrayed on Instagram, and the pressure I felt from using this site motivated me to write this thesis. This study aims to uncover if any other young black women are influenced by this “idealised body” they see on Instagram, how much it is affecting them and how much they feel pressured to look the part and lastly, to develop possible solutions on how to eliminate this pressure on young girls. Sociocultural influences such as pressure and internalisation might lead to an increase in an external view of one’s own body which finally may lead to body dissatisfaction (Paxton et al., 2006). The relationship between the use of more common forms of social media and body image concerns, however, has not yet been examined in greater detail.

This study contributes to literature by probing the role that social media (in particular, Instagram) plays in body disturbance among young Black female college students by perpetuating the ideal of curvaceous bodies and also examining their self-esteem. It has been shown that girls report lower self-esteem compared to boys (e.g. Frost & McKelvie, 2004) and that self-esteem is a significant prospective predictor of body dissatisfaction in girls (Paxton et al., 2006). Although body image dissatisfaction is unlikely be the reason a student seeks counselling, it may have an impact on their presenting problem and overall self-concept or self-esteem (Berfort et al., 2001). The famous comedian and TV show host, Trevor Noah, posted on his social media: “Don’t be fooled by social media, most of these slay queens are hungry, borrowing clothes, hair and even phones for taking pics, focus on your goals baby girl”. Pressure is evident and even a male notices that social media, Instagram to be precise, puts unnecessary pressure on young girls, with pictures that are conventional and/or enhanced. Body dissatisfaction is undoubtedly a central issue for young women, and it is important that all the possible causes of body dissatisfaction be investigated or researched.

1.3 Research questions

Key questions explored in this research include the following:

1. How does the curvaceous body ideal trending on Instagram affect young Black women?
2. Do the young Black women feel pressure to make their bodies look a certain way, i.e. more curvaceous?
3. Do young Black women use specific extreme exercise and extreme diets to change their body shapes to copy the ideal curvy shape on Instagram?
4. Do young Black women consider surgery in order to conform to the bodies seen on Instagram?

5. What or who do young Black women think is the biggest cause of their body image concerns?

1.4 Research objectives

The following research objectives were identified:

1. Probe to what extent the curvaceous idolised body on Instagram causes body dissatisfaction in young Black women.
2. Explore young Black women's satisfaction/dissatisfaction of their bodies.
3. Identify the preferences of young Black women's body types, shapes or sizes.
4. Establish other influences that pressure young Black women to want to look a certain way.

1.5 Survey of existing research

The first step in developing a body of knowledge essentially begins with searching previous research to understand how far the people in the field of interest have gone through the issue (Kumar & Phrommathed, 2005). Despite a good number of studies on social networking, little is known about the specific views of users about Instagram with theoretical support (Abbott et al., 2013; Sema, 2013a; Salomon, 2013). Moreover, as studies on Instagram are predominantly done in a western context, how consumers in emerging markets perceive Instagram remains largely unanswered (Sema, 2013a; Salomon, 2013). Also how Instagram may be a possible cause for body dissatisfaction has not been explored nor why curvaceous bodies are the ideal. Body image is an integral, ever present but ever changing part of women's lives; for instance, in the early 1940s, being thin was associated with being tense, compliant and reserved. Later, during the late 1980s, this perception changed and thin became the most physically appealing and sexy (Viulani et al. 2013, p. 4). And now curvaceous bodies are trending and have become or are becoming the new ideal.

This literature review focuses significantly on how Instagram perpetuates the curvaceous body ideal. Not many studies have been conducted around this issue since Instagram and this newly perpetuated idolised body is also recent. However, ideal bodies have always been around. Related previous research has looked at the beauty myth: how images of beauty are used against women. Wolf (2002) argued that "it's the beauty myth, an obsession with physical perfection that traps the modern women in endless spirals of hope, self-consciousness, and self-hatred". Similarly, Robbie (1999, p.6) stated that "the mid-1970s feminists have argued that mass media, especially women's magazines, popular TV shows, music videos etc., are oppressive because they constantly inform women about their physical inadequacies and draw them into the idea and promise that bodily satisfaction can be bought". Similarly Lowery (2005) argued that constant exposure to unrealistic "ideal" images

through television, music videos, movies and magazines seems to add to women's struggle to be perfect and their dissatisfaction with current bodies. Now Instagram has added to this oppression/pressure and is playing a huge role in it. This is evident as women have become enhanced as they attempt to buy this bodily satisfaction through surgeries, filters and panties with added buttocks.

Previous related studies mainly assessed exposure to social networking sites such as Facebook, as part of overall Internet exposure (Tiggermann & Miller, 2010). Tiggermann and Slatter (2013) found that time spent on Facebook was more significantly related to heightened levels of body image concerns, involving the internalisation of the thin ideal body, body surveillance, and the drive for thinness, compared to other types of Internet sites. Existing related research has also demonstrated a positive correlation between Facebook usage and bodily dissatisfaction (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2015). Research shows that women regularly evaluate their appearance by comparing themselves to others (Leahey, Crowther & Mickelson, 2007), and that a greater tendency to engage in appearance comparisons is associated with a high level of body dissatisfaction (Keery et al, 2004). Social media has become a well-used platform for women to compare themselves by sharing photos of themselves. Meyer and Cukier (2013) added that, given that 10 million new photographs are uploaded to Facebook every hour, Facebook provides women with a medium for frequently engaging in appearance related social comparisons and can therefore potentially contribute to body image concerns among young women. With Instagram, the pressure multiplies and Instagram is dominated by celebrities and models. Comparing oneself to a celebrity may be more devastating than comparing oneself to an ordinary friend, because celebrities' enhanced beauty and bodies are on another level and the pictures they take are more on a professional level. However Jones (2001) argued that the relationship between appearance comparison and body image dissatisfaction appears to be the same regardless of whether young adults compare themselves to peers or to media celebrities.

Social media use differs from consumption of more traditional media formats in the sense that the process is more interactive, allowing users to actively search for the content and engage in certain activities (Kim & Chock, 2015). Similarly, social media websites are characterised by interactive features that differ from earlier forms of media and have been found to hold different psychological outcomes for users in terms of body image concerns (e.g., Fardouly & Vartanian, 2015; Teodoro & Chang, 2014; Tiggermann & Slater, 2013; for a review, see Perloff, 2014).

Social media provide immensely more personal outlets than conventional impersonal mass media. People can bond with technology, and content can revolve around the self, illustrated by the contemporary parlance (Facebook personal profiles, YouTube, selfies or digitised self-portraits, and, more broadly, the i-phone. Self-disclosure has long played a prominent role in computer-mediated communication (Joinson & Paine, 2007). This manifests itself in the multitude of blogs, personalised customisation of sites, and digitised pictures that depict the

self, friends, or strangers an individual personally admires, available on Instagram, Pinterest, and Snapchat, with its visual story application (Wortham & Goel, 2013).

A key feature that distinguishes contemporary social media technologies from conventional mass media is interactivity (Eveland, 2003). Users are sources, as well as receivers, sometimes virtually simultaneously. These differences between conventional and social media have important implications for social media effects on body image concerns. Social media is filled with pictures of an individual, her online friends, and multitudes of curvaceous, idealised images that an adolescent girl or young woman may have located and pinned to a page. Social networking sites are available for viewing, content-creating, and editing 24/7, on mobile devices, anywhere, anytime, allowing for exponentially more opportunities for social comparison and dysfunctional surveillance of pictures of disliked body parts than were ever available with the conventional mass media.

Within many social media sites that facilitate photo sharing, such as Instagram, Pinterest and Twitter, users have the option to label images with multiple tags (e.g., #Thickness #bodygoals #thickfit #gym #fashion #curvy) that allow images to be classified and more readily searched. Multiple tags allow the image to appear in multiple search results for example a search for “fitness” images would lead to thickness also tagged with the word “fitness”. Understanding what tags tend to co-occur with thickness-related tags can offer insight into likely patterns of exposure to this content (Bahadur, 2013). Therefore, these types of social engagement behaviours may increase opportunities for users to view the enhanced images that social media friends post on their profiles, in turn leading to a greater tendency to compare their appearance to others (Kim & Chock, 2015). Previous research has shown that females overestimate their body sizes (McCreary & Sadava, 1999) and have low levels of body satisfaction after viewing ideal body images (Stice & Shaw, 1994). Internalisation of the media ideal and perceived pressure to conform to the ideal have not only been found to be predictors of objectified body consciousness, they have also been found to directly predict body dissatisfaction in female pre-adolescents and adolescents (Cafri et al., 2005; Sands & Wardle, 2003; Stice & Bearman, 2001). Meta-analysis of cross-sectional studies found that internalisation has medium-to-large associations with body dissatisfaction (Cafri et al. 2005) in female samples.

According to Patton (2006), the marginalisation of certain types of beauty that deviate from the “norm” are devastating to all women. Tshegofa (2014, p.1) suggested that the body is a contested site of struggle and that this is especially true for women who do not fit into the conventional beauty ideal. Some women want to feel special, to look beautiful and be considered beautiful; therefore if one’s body is not categorised as beautiful or regarded as the norm, then this is problematic. Biased media images of ideal female beauty seem to contribute to the fact that one woman of every two is dissatisfied with her body (Hendriks 2002). Particularly females have not only biased perceptions and beliefs regarding body

shapes, they obviously feel pressure to conform to those standards as well (Milkie, 1999; Murray, Touyz & Beumont, 1996). Facebook, Twitter and Instagram feeds (updates) are constantly bombarded with slim-thick models and celebrities (Haneen, 2016). One is repeatedly exposed to that slim waist and thick hips and buttocks. Haneen (2016) added that a significant issue with this glorification is that it appropriates Black women's bodies only and the constant glorification of one over the other generally excludes other body types. With the slim-thick figure, those who are only thick will try to slim their waists and those who are only slim will resort to unhealthy habits to become thick. The ones who don't fit in any of those categories will feel excluded and ashamed of their bodies.

Research has suggested that the ideals that women perceive to be attractive can be heavily influenced by men's preferences of an ideal female body (Molloy & Herzberger, 1998). Similarly, Poran (2006) argued that the influence of the 'male gaze' is noted as being an important factor for women's feelings about bodily appearance. Studies have found that Black men consider a larger body size more attractive than a smaller body size (Thompson et al., 1996) and that Black men prefer women with a curvaceous lower body shape (i.e. wide hips and a round buttocks) (Jackson & McGill 1996). Also, a recent study on Internet daters' body type preferences found that Black men had stronger preferences for larger and voluptuous body types of potential female daters than slim or slender feminine body types, which were preferred by White men (Glasser et al., 2009). In the South African Black culture, Black men's general reported preference for a voluptuous body shape may still have a strong influence on Black women's perceptions of body shape because some Black women are aware of this preference (Poran, 2006). Socio-cultural trends regarding female beauty are often regarded as being based on patriarchal ideologies and therefore in the Black culture, larger body shapes might be more accepted because they are supported by patriarchal ideologies linked to ideas about women's fertility and child-bearing capacities (Poran, 2006). Sarwer et al. (2003) proposed that for men, fertility, health and youth are important indicators for partner selection; therefore, men might unconsciously look for markers of fertility which are then translated into physical features.

Physical features identified by Sarwer et al. (2003) which were determined for mate selection included: face and body symmetry; averageness; fuller figure and youthfulness. Facial and bodily symmetry has been regarded as significant characteristics in the selection of a sexual partner. Thus an attractive person has higher chances of finding a partner than a person who is not attractive (Sarwer et al., 2003). According to McKinley and Hyde (1996), females are more likely than males to learn to view their bodies from an outsider's perspective.

True African beauty is about taking pride in your own body. In Africa, the big phenomena is about being curvaceous, thus implying your sensuality as a woman. Also African beauty is captured through the ethnic traditions that emphasise how one should embrace the human form with body adornment and ornamentation. "Traditional African beauty celebrates a woman's curvy yet voluptuous figure. In Nigeria it is normal for a girl as young as six years of age to be 'fattened up' before she is married. The young woman is sent to the 'fattening room'

where she is isolated from her village during the very private affair. She is expected to put on as many pounds as possible, so she is not allowed to do any physical work except eat as much as she can. She is usually assigned her own attendant and room in her parent's home. The young woman's room consists of a single bare bamboo bed and area to take care of her personal hygiene. It is here where she is taught to be a good wife in catering to her husband's needs and caring for children. This process ensures the girl's ability to conceive and bear a healthy baby, which is associated with the broadening of her hips. The bigger and healthier she is the better. A woman's lustrous round body implies her desirability, her value in being a suitable choice for a wife, and is also reflective of her family's wealth (Brink, 1995, pp. 71-83). It is evident that some African women have always valued curvaceous bodies and their preferences were very much influenced by men's preferences. Today 'fattening rooms' are used less and less. However, the use of using a 'fattening room' is still popular among wealthy families that can afford such an expense. Fattening rooms are now sometimes associated with infertility because many women are becoming too overweight. Also, schooling and the press for education interferes with the time a girl can stay in "the fattening room".

"Every woman knows that, regardless of all her other achievements, she is a failure if she is not beautiful" (Greer, 1999, p.23). This quote from Germaine Greer's book *The Whole Woman*, captures the value that is placed on female beauty as well as surfacing the notion that in a patriarchal society, a woman's physical appearance is more important than anything else she may do or aspire to be. What this quote implies is that a woman's internal attributes are never afforded the same importance as her 'outer-beauty' or lack thereof (Shelembe, 2015). Indeed, beauty in and of itself is a concept which does not remain stagnant as what was regarded as 'beautiful' in a previous era may not currently be regarded as so in modern society (Patton, 2005; Wolf, 1990). In any given society, cultural messages about beauty standards are transmitted which women then aspire to. According to Sutton (2009), the criterion of beauty for women has changed from the "youthful, cosmeticized, slimmed, urban" to the "highly sexualized, wrinkle free and anorexic woman" (p. 47). Patton (2006) argued that the body is somewhat malleable and can be altered to a form that is considered beautiful in one's culture. She gave the extreme example of Chinese foot binding – a traditional practice dating back to the 18th century whereby Chinese girls had their feet painfully bound, reshaping the foot in a manner regarded as highly attractive in those times in that culture. A bound foot was regarded as sexually appealing to men thus reinforcing patriarchal dominance. The appalling consequence of this cultural practice was that these women could not walk away as a result of foot binding (Patton, 2006). European women of the sixteenth century practiced superficial body modification by wearing constricting corsets which accentuated their waists and breasts (Patton, 2006). Some even had ribs surgically removed to reduce their waists. In other African tribes, such as the Mursi tribe in Ethiopia, there is the practice of lip stretching which is common for women. This is an important qualifier for marriage because the bigger the lip, the more desirable the woman becomes and the more eligible she becomes for marriage (Greenberg, 2010). Thus wanting to be seen as

beautiful in one's culture often necessitates that women should be prepared to endure painful and permanently disfiguring procedures.

During the late eighteenth century, anthropologists compared women of different cultures and their interest was focused on the sexual traits a woman possessed. A woman's feminine beauty was characterised by the redness of her lips, length of her hair, the size of the breasts, her fertility, and ultimately the shape and size of her pelvis (Ibanga, 2017). The pelvis was associated with the procreative qualities and was a measure of 'womanliness'. Eighteenth century anatomists like Petrus Camper felt that the African pelvis was more spacious and bigger than a European's woman who was seen to have the ideal build. As a result, African women were cast as having the ability to give birth with ease (Ibanga, 2017). This justified the belief that slave women could be worked during their pregnancy and still be sent out to the fields to work again a few days after giving birth. Black women were often seen as promiscuous and morally loose in relation to the purported chastity of White women (Marshall, 1996).

Under colonialism, "images of black women as hypersexual have been used to justify [their] sexual exploitation" (Marshall, 1996, p.5). Young (1996) explained that the image of the Black woman as sexual originated during slavery as it was common for White male slave owners to have sexual relations with Black female slaves. This served two purposes: to increase the labour force through the production of more slaves and to exert control over Black female slaves (Young, 1996). Black female slaves were sexually exploited and they were blamed for luring White male owners as the slave owners did not assume any responsibility over their actions. It seems that the image of the Black woman as morally loose has endured and over time these images have become embedded in culture (Young, 1996). The African female could never embody true femininity. In popular eighteenth century beliefs, a woman should be 'delicate, pure and passionless, a bastion of moral and spiritual virtue' (Ibanga, 2017).

The African female was understood as never being able to capture these qualities. African beauty was undermined and transformed into being regarded as beastly and savage. Due to the negative connotations attached to the erotic-ness of Black women, Black women were portrayed in a negative light (Thompson, 2008). Cultural perceptions of beauty can thus be seen in the conceptualisation of beauty as linked to different time periods in all societies (Greer, 1991). African conceptualisations of beauty are in feminine terms; and perhaps every usage of the word "beauty" or "beautiful" is usually constructed to celebrate womanhood or feminine spirit. Beauty connotes celebration of worth, value, quality, essence, and desirability. Hence, the concept of beauty in Africa is quite broad, and varies from one cultural community to another. In Africa, beauty is generally associated with women and it is forbidden or rather inappropriate to use the term 'beautiful' when referring to a man (here 'handsome' is used).

Matiza (2013) stated that in the African context “beauty is not for the sake of being beautiful” (p.65). Beauty, according to him, has social character; rather than being individualistic, it is communal. Matiza (2013) argued that “from the African perspective, the concept of beauty has to have a purpose which it fulfils” (p.63). Beauty must serve to communicate values, norms, morals, and purpose. Beauty must edify the community. Muhammad (1993), in investigating the concept of beauty among the Sudanese, came to the following conclusion, that beauty is found in “good behaviour, skills, knowledge, dress” as well as in “physical features” (p.50). There cannot be beauty for its own sake; beauty must be intended to serve society. Matiza (2013) argued that the kind of beauty of which a person or thing intended to achieve as beauty to its own self alone without considering the sensitivities of others in the community, is un-African. He maintained that beauty in an African context implies working together. That is to say, beauty must reflect the communalistic nature of African societies. Polycarp Ikuenobe (2016) asserted that in Africa “a person or a thing is considered good, and thus, beautiful, if directed toward achieving or enhancing harmony and order in reality of which the community, people, and things are a part” (p.134). Beauty of a person or thing should be participatory and interconnective rather than individualistic; and should be meaningful only in the context of the acceptable standards of the community.

Similarly, Wolf (1990), a contemporary feminist writer, argued that the notion of beauty should be analysed through a gendered lens because this notion still has the power to hold women captive as they struggle to have a sense of freedom in relation to the physical self. Since women’s liberation only took place in overtly political power struggles and not in the realm of physical struggles, the expectations for women to be beautiful seems to have only increased (Wolf, 1990). Wolf (1990) argued that even though women have transcended power struggles, the way in which women feel about their bodies has not improved. Thus women are not free to do what they want with their bodies because they still feel the need to conform to the standards of beauty promoted within different societies. Wolf (1990) also offered the metaphor of the ‘iron maiden’ which represents a standard of beauty that is out of reach for most women and which also affects them physically and psychologically.

Previous literature has focused on thin bodies being the ideal and causing body dissatisfaction among women; however this study is focusing on the “new ideal” of the curvaceous ideal being the potential cause of body dissatisfaction. Several studies have associated a curvaceous body with health problems. There has been criticism of western society for its emphasis on a slender female physique and negative stereotyping of obese figures (Lake, Staiger, & Glowinski, 2000). Popular media and advertising represent a rather homogenous and “colonised” female body of certain size and shape (Featherstone, 1991; Freedman, 2002; Joy & Venkatesh, 1994); overweight individuals, if at all present in advertising, are often or have often been portrayed as glum, downcast or humorous characters (Featherstone, 1991). Taylor (2015) argued that the images are created, posted, shared, and often sought out with the goal of promoting thinness. Bahadur (2013), Columbia Broadcasting System New York

(2012,) Public Broadcasting Service (2014) and Spiegel (2013) have all argued that the proliferation of thin-ideal imagery referred to as thin-spiration across social media websites like Pinterest, Tumblr and Twitter has received significant media attention in recent years. Thinspiration is thin-ideal media content (i.e., images and/or prose) that intentionally promotes weight loss, often in a manner that encourages or glorifies dangerous behaviours characteristic of eating disorders (Lewis & Arbuthnott, 2012; National Eating Disorders Association, 2013). Such content is frequently accompanied by explicit encouragement or advice on losing weight and staying thin (Lapinski, 2009). Appearance not meeting the socially accepted standards, such as slimness and fitness, had been considered as laziness, lack of self-discipline and even moral failure (Featherstone, 1991; Joy & Venkatesh, 1994). That may still be the case today since slimness and fitness are still considered as healthy showing that a person is working hard exercising and taking care of one's body. Accordingly, Bordo [1990, 1993] argued that in western society a slim body is an equivalent of self-discipline and control of impulse and desire (Joy & Venkatesh 1994). The slender/slim beauty ideal thus created a social hierarchy and competition among women by privileging not only thin, but thin, White, able-bodied women with western physics and figure. Succeeding in this social bodily hierarchy had been proven to affect women's job positions; for example, slim women were found more likely to achieve higher educational, professional and income levels than overweight women (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Freedman 2002).

Previous related research has asserted that, given the harmful effects associated with thin ideal media content (Grabe et al., 2008; Groesz et al., 2002), the ease of access to such images on social media (Columbia Broadcasting System New York, 2012), the degree to which these websites facilitate interaction with a community of like-minded users (Amichai-Hamburger, 2007), and the increasing and widespread use of these channels by a younger, vulnerable audience of preteens and teens is problematic (Bahadur, 2013; Duggan & Brenner, 2013). Further research into the nature of potentially problematic content on social media websites is warranted. In this study, prior research into thinspiration content was being opposed by the thick-curvaceous ideal patterns being perpetuated on popular social media, Instagram. Overstreet (2010) in her findings highlighted the need to consider valued body ideals other than thinness as potential sources of dissatisfaction among women of different racial/ ethnic backgrounds.

Researchers have found that perceptions of beauty are more influenced by mass media, social interactions and culture, than individual identity and a sense of self-worth (Englis, Solomon & Ashmore, 2004, p 6). Similarly, perceptions of body weight and body image are said to be primarily influenced by a person's culture, social preferences, race, ethnicity and the media (Grabe & Hyde, 2006, p.622). Traditionally, South Africans associate curvaceous with beauty, health, wealth, higher social status, happiness, and affluence; this still holds true in some parts of present day South Africa (Muris, Meesters, van de Blom & Mayer, 2005, p.2). Similarly, (McGarvey, 1991) added that in many traditional, non-Western settings, it is argued that body

fat is believed to be an indicator of wealth and prosperity with obesity as a symbol of economic success, femininity, and sexual capacity (Ghannam, 1997; Nasser, 1988). In Black African communities, being slim or skinny has often been associated with disease, misery and poverty, but has become the prominent beauty ideal in most societies (Muris et al., 2005, p.2). There are longstanding problems with infectious diseases, including lower respiratory tract infections, meningitis, HIV/AIDS, diarrhea, septicemia and TB, which, when combined with low levels of immunisation, make potential infection a serious possibility (South African Department of Health, 1998, 2000). The health consequences linked to these serious diseases include weight loss, and this is reflected in the perception that a lower body mass may signal potential parasitic infection or disease (Clark et al., 1999; Mvo et al., 1999). It is therefore not surprising that a higher female Body Mass Index (BMI) is regarded as attractive in South Africa and these preferences may have been reinforced by the health problems prevalent in South Africa. A higher BMI is also linked to a range of health problems including diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and stroke (Manson et al., 1995; Willet et al., 1995). However, in the conditions that prevail in KwaZulu-Natal, the positive features of a higher female BMI may outweigh the potential dangers, which may explain the pattern of attractiveness ratings by the SA Zulus.

With that said, there have been many body ideal debates amongst African nations, sparked by the growing popularity of beauty pageants, modern trends and health issues which idealise a thin body and consider having a bigger body size medically and socially abnormal (Shabangu, 2016, p.36). Body image is an integral, ever present but ever changing part of women's lives: for instance, Solomon et al. (2006) stated that, before the 1900s the long-term female beauty ideal in western societies was voluptuous, buxom and full-figured; around 1920s the ideal shifted towards a more slender and boyish figure for the first time (Freedman, 2002). Banner [1980] and Grogan [1999] mentioned 'flappers', stylish and independent women, as the beauty icons of 1920's (Redmond 2003; Solomon et al. 2006). During 1930s, however, beauty ideals shifted back towards round, soft and curvaceous figure, remaining unchanged all the way to the end of 1950s (Solomon et al., 2006). The first significantly radical, and, at the moment rather permanent, shift in ideals of beauty in western societies was experienced around 1960s, when previously idealised feminine buxomness and curvaceous figures were replaced by glorifying of extreme slimness (Redmond, 2003). Grogan [1999] argued that this idealisation of extreme slimness – starvation, even – was at its strongest during 1990's (Redmond, 2003), but, has more or less remained as the dominant beauty ideal in western society even today. But the curvaceous ideal has come back as well and slowly taking over. The constantly changing 'socially acceptable' body image causes woman of all body types including slim and curvy, to feel excluded and uncertain about their bodies at some point as a result of not being considered "ideal" at that time.

Mazur (1986, p.282) noted that it has become a cultural and societal norm to see women experience greater anxiety about physical attractiveness than men. Bordo (1993) suggested

that changes in beauty ideals are often explained through changing ideologies and meanings in society and culture (Redmond 2003). Ribane (2006, p.16) suggested that South Africa's history and the emphasis on the ideals of White supremacy have had a negative impact on the self-image and native beauty culture of the majority of women.

There are a number of social and individual difference factors that can place young women at risk for body image disturbances. Based on theory and research on the role individual difference variables play in body image dynamics, one can reasonably argue that the following should place adolescent girls and young women at risk for body image problems: low self-esteem, depression, perfectionism, internalisation of the thinness/ curvaceous ideal, and centrality of appearance to self-worth (Perloff, 2014). The researchers make a point that when girls are unable to attain an ideal body shape they are likely to have feelings of dissatisfaction about their bodies. Furthermore, they are at risk of developing unhealthy eating habits (Kelly, Bulik & Mazzeo, 2011; Barturka, Hornsby & Schorling, 2000; Allan et al., 1993; Wassenaar et al., 2000; Rucker & Cash, 1992). Data-based evidence for the effects of these particular factors on body image concerns, as well as reviews offering empirically-derived and conceptually-based arguments for the impact these characteristics should exert on body image dynamics, can be found in Crowther and Williams (2011); Levine and Chapman (2011); Mischner et al. (2013); Mitchell et al. (2012); Murray et al. (2013); Myers et al. (2012); Noser and Zeigler-Hill (2014); Paxton et al. (2006); Sinton and Birch (2006); Stice et al. (1994); Wertheim et al. (2004, 2009). Research findings do not as yet allow a determination of which of these factors is most important, nor whether each factor has to be present for social media effects to occur. There have not been enough studies comparing the relative impact of these variables on body dissatisfaction at this time. Nonetheless, the model offers fruitful suggestions about the role that individual difference factors can play in body image dynamics (Perloff, 2014).

With the trend of the curvaceous ideal, a new curvy Barbie doll was created in 2016. *Barbie* is a fashion doll produced by Mattel Company. The doll has become something of a cultural icon promoting an impossible body ideal for young girls (Greer, 1999) – *Barbie* has always been thin, tall and has long silky hair. The change in Barbie's body type did not come out of the blue: one can argue that the change may have been influenced by the global trend of curvaceous bodies, given that the doll has been criticized for decades but there was never a change. Criticism on the doll focused mostly on her unrealistic body and the stereotypical image she represented of women, namely; beauty, fashion and appearance of which are the most valued aspects of a woman's life (Driessen, 2016). In 2015, Mattel executives decided that they had to take a whole new turn with the Barbie doll. The project resulted in the creation of the 2016 "Fashionistas" Barbie line. The line includes three new body types (petite, tall and curvy), seven different skin tones and twenty-four hairstyles. These minor changes did not radically differ Barbie's appearance however: her iconic figure has largely remained the same over the past decades. Of course, the curvy Barbie is launched in a very different

time than the first Barbie in 1959 (Driessen, 2016). A lot has changed for women since the 1950s: today it is very common for women to have a career and be financially independent. Also with feminism and black feminism, Black women are fighting to be equally represented as ideals in terms of body, skin colour and hair as much as White women. Francois (2012) argued that, although women's physical appearance seems to be given more emphasis than men's in the media, a 'double pressure' has been exerted on Black women when compared to White women. Black women are expected to conform to the beauty ideals of Western Standards which value 'White physical' features over 'Black physical' features (Fujioka, Ryan, Agle, Legaspi & Toohey, 2009). If we look at the way women are represented in popular culture, we also see that there is more work to be done as women are still very much defined by their appearance and gender stereotypes continue to perpetuate modern popular culture (Driessen, 2016). Being thin and white is still the beauty standard we see most often in the media, but some companies especially on social media, have expanded their marketing campaigns to include plus size models and women with different ethnical backgrounds. As the curvaceous bodies of celebrities such as Kim Kardashian and Beyoncé become popular images, we see that the beauty ideal is perhaps slowly evolving to include women with curvaceous bodies. An iconic figure like the Barbie doll cannot stay behind in this development. Barbie is still a very influential and important toy as it is introduced to girls at a very young age.

Digital photo manipulation is believed to strengthen the unrealistic portrayal of women and the distorted beauty ideal in the society (Kim & Lennon, 2007; Reaves et al., 2004; Scriven, 2007). Although many girls and women are aware of the manipulation of advertising images, the awareness doesn't seem to decrease the anxiety caused by these images; female portrayal seems to carry a number of harmful effects on the lives of girls and women despite knowing that the images aren't real (Reaves et al., 2004; Zimmerman & Dahlberg, 2008). As mentioned previously, Instagram enables users to take photos or pictures, apply the different manipulation tools to transform the appearance of images, and share them instantly with friends on different social networking sites (Hochman & Schwartz, 2012), it is evident that this site may be adding to the unrealistic portrayal of woman and potentially cause body dissatisfaction. Kim and Lennon (2007), among others, have argued that appearance and physical characteristics are one of the most important evaluative criteria of women today. Joy and Venkatesh (1994) added that the person with a socially approved aesthetic body is seen as the moral equivalent of a good person – the person who feels good (inner body), looks good (outer body) and, ultimately, *is* good (moral). This depicts the socially approved, almost impossible-to-attain female ideal pressures of women who compare themselves with those images and controlling their bodies to achieve the idealised standards (Bessenoff, 2006; Clay et al., 2005; Featherstone, 1991; Freedman, 2002; Jalees & Majid, 2009; Lin & Kulik, 2002). Featherstone (1991) argued that connecting images of beautiful and sexual bodies with hedonism and pleasure emphasises the importance of appearance and body maintenance through which the accepted appearance and social approval can be attained. Bodily

advertising images make individuals overly self-conscious of their appearance, the outer body, and encourages them towards self-improvement through shaping and making effort with their bodies in order to attain society's idealised appearance promoted in media images (Featherstone, 1991; Joy & Venkatesh, 1994).

Advertising can, thus, be considered to play a major role in the formation of culturally and socially accepted norms, such as beauty standards (Lin & Yeh, 2009). Buttle (1991) agreed that advertising constructs realities and shapes individuals' attitudes, values and sense of self and, in addition, provides consumers with role models (Percy & Elliott, 2009). It guides consumers with hints of what is "needed" – needed to be feminine or masculine, for example (Lin & Yeh, 2009). The cultural context would, according to McCracken (1987), be incomprehensible without these instructions provided by advertising. Advertising has been criticised for its deceptive nature and for creating unnecessary needs among consumers. Critics accuse advertising of stimulating materialism, exaggerating the requirements of good life and depicting unattainable goals (Percy & Elliott, 2009) Scriven (2007), for example, accused media in all its forms of creating and maintaining the unrealistic, digitally manipulated beauty ideal. However, Percy and Elliott (2009) emphasised that media alone is not responsible of depicting unattainable life goals, such as unrealistic beauty ideals. Accusations of the distorted, narrowly defined beauty ideal have indeed been pointed not only towards the media but towards fashion magazine publishers, advertising agencies and beauty product producers as well (Rudd & Lennon, 2001). Instagram has become a new platform for brands to advertise or market their businesses and thus has added a tool or become a tool that is responsible for depicting unrealistic beauty ideals.

1.6 Structure of the dissertation

Chapter 1: Introduction and Literature Review

This chapter incorporates the background to the study, statement of problem, objectives of study, research questions and research hypothesis. It also contains a literature review, which provides definitions of key concepts of the study and reviews previous related studies. This helped to reveal a gap in the available literature on the subject matter discussed in this study. Explaining the rationale of a study helps to show how valuable the study could be to the field. Thus, the first chapter shows the significance of the study and the key questions that have guided and shaped the study.

Chapter 2: Theoretical and Methodological Framework

In this chapter, the methodologies and theoretical frameworks that were used in the research are presented. Reasoning behind the use of each methodology and its contribution to the data collection and analysis of the study is given. The site in which the study was conducted, how the research participants were recruited, how the data was collected and the tools used for such is discussed in detail. The methods of data collection, sampling and sample selection techniques are provided. I also stated the possible ethical issues that could have arisen in this

study and the actions taken to avoid them. I also present the principal theories, models and frameworks upon which the research is based and finally present the structure of the dissertation.

Chapter 3: Trending Bodies on Instagram

This chapter probes, describes and engages with the curvaceous body type that is trending on Instagram, and how (if it does) it affects young Black women as the new ideal.

Chapter 4: Women's Preferences regarding Body Types, Shapes or Sizes

This chapter looks at data gathered regarding young black women's preferences on body types, shapes or sizes and what influences those preferences.

Chapter 5: Extreme Exercises and Extreme Diets

Based on the findings, this chapter explores how young black women use exercises or extreme diets to change their body shapes.

Chapter 6: Surgery

This chapter probes if young black women consider surgery to conform to the bodies seen on Instagram.

Chapter 7: Summary and Conclusion

This chapter summarises the whole study drawing out particular research findings and discussing how they impact on the entire study.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

Research refers to a search for knowledge. Research, as defined by Kothari, is “a scientific and systematic search for pertinent information on a specific topic” (2004, p.1). Gaining pertinent information about any given study or phenomenon is critical to any conclusion that will be made on any subject matter. However, accessing the necessary data that will help in reaching a conclusion about the study depends on a methodological approach to the venture. This chapter discusses the research design that was used for this study, the various methods of data collection and sampling techniques which were used to recruit participants. It also discusses how data was processed and validated as well as ethical issues that were taken into consideration throughout this study. The theories adopted in this research will also be discussed, as theories serve as a guiding principle to any study, especially in anthropology (Barnard, 2000, p. 1; Creswell, 2009, p.51; McGee & Warms, 2004, p. 1).

2.2 Research design

This study has made use of a qualitative research methodology. Nyamongo and Ryan (2001, p.1) defined qualitative research as research which uses any data that does not involve ordinal or statistical values; instead it relies on linguistic data and thus was appropriate for this study. It is research that produces qualitative data that is based on the written or spoken language, or in the form of observations that are recorded in language, and analyses the data by identifying and categorising themes (Sherman & Reid, 1994). Qualitative methodology is interpretive; it puts emphasis on meaning and seeks to show how people’s subjective understandings and experiences influence and are influenced by wider social systems or structures. Additionally, it allows the researcher to assume that research participants’ perceptions, feelings, ideas, actions and experiences are a result of socially constructed meanings and experiences instead of meanings and experiences constructed independently by themselves. This was appropriate for this study because it aimed at uncovering the influence of societal beauty ideals of Black women’s perceptions of beauty. A qualitative approach is important in social science research. Qualitative research seeks to explain rather than measure the world; this is one of the main reasons why this study adopted this approach. This approach is often explanatory, holistic and interpretative (May & Pope, 1995). It should also be noted that this study adopts a qualitative approach because the subject under investigation incorporates complex social issues that are best captured through detailed exploration of practices, debates, ideas and decisions. Qualitative methods allow the researcher to study selected issues in depth, openness and detail as they identify and attempt to understand the categories of information that emerge from the data. Qualitative methods are relevant to this research study since they can be used to better understand any phenomenon about which little is yet known (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Also qualitative

research reports are typically rich in detail and insights into participants' experience of the world. Qualitative research is interested in understanding meanings which people and their societies have constructed and attached to certain parts of their lives (Merriam, 2009, p.13), such as the meanings constructed, held and attached to women's bodies or "ideal bodies".

2.3 Sampling method

The study used non-probability purposive sampling. Non-probability sampling may be considered as sampling where the selection of participants is not determined by the statistical principle of randomness; therefore the chance of one being selected as a participant is unknown. In non-probability sampling, the sample of participants needs to have characteristics which best suit the participant criteria set according to the purpose of the study (Richie & Lewis, 2003, p.78). The researcher ensured that the participants selected had appropriate characteristics, such as Instagram user, Black, female, age range (18-30), studying at the UKZN Howard college campus. Additionally, the researcher ensured that the participants chosen for individual interviews were slim, and the focus group included both slim individuals and those with fuller figures because both these groups, according to the study's description of 'curvy', do not meet the "ideal" curvy shape. Participants were stratified according to age, race and gender (stratified sampling). The study had 50 participants. The researcher recruited participants using snowball sampling. Snowball sampling may be defined as gradually accumulating the number of participants by identifying people who are relevant to the study and asking them for referral to other relevant people who might also be interested in being participants. I already had participants whom I knew personally and who agreed to participate in the study. I therefore asked them to refer me to relevant people who might be interested in participating.

2.4 Research site

The situatedness of a study plays a big role in the understanding of any given phenomenon, how the data related to that phenomenon is collected, and how the data impacts on the outcome of the study. The study was conducted at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard college campus. This location was selected because of the availability of relevant participants and because of the positioning of the researcher as a postgraduate student on the campus. Generally speaking, students also have access to free Wi-Fi and they spend all the time they want on social media. Furthermore, being a student at Howard I could observe how much Howard college campus girls care about their image, judging by the way they look and dress. I also recognised some of the young Black women from Howard College Campus who were active on Instagram and I followed some of them on Instagram.

2.5 Target population

The researcher's target population was based at the University of KwaZulu-Natal Howard College campus. with female students in both undergraduate and postgraduate levels of study, ranging between the ages of 18 and 30 years. It was appropriate to choose both undergraduate and postgraduate participants, in order to accommodate the age range. The age range of 18-30 years did not only constitute 'young women' but also allowed for the gathering of data from different age groups, as perceptions could also vary and change with age. UKZN is estimated to have 44 000 students across five campuses, with Howard college campus estimated to have 12 200 students with 37.5% males and 62.5% females. I worked with 50 participants. According to Richie et al. (2003, p.84), qualitative samples often lie around 50. Qualitative studies typically require a smaller sample size than quantitative studies (Terre Blanche et al., 2006, p. 288).

2.6 Data collection

Data was collected through individual/ semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Semi-structured interviews are one of the data collection methods used in qualitative research. According to Gray (2004, p.189), interviewing generally (and semi-structured interviews specifically) is a powerful and useful way of helping people to explain, unpack and make things clear that may have been kept hidden. A semi-structured interview is a method of interview that is designed using a number of interview questions prepared in advance (Polkinghorne, 2005, p.5). These questions, however, are open-ended and flexible, thereby differentiating this approach from a structured interview. This approach enabled the researcher to be flexible to the order in which the questions and topics were discussed and more importantly, allowed informants to express in their own terms. It also provided reliable, comparable qualitative data. Lastly, semi-structured interviews allowed the interviewer to be prepared and to appear competent during the interview.

The advantages of semi-structured interviews include: they allow the researcher to uncover meanings that participants attribute to their experiences and provide for an in-depth exploration of social life (Dickson-Swift et al., 2007). Semi-structured interviews are flexible, thereby permitting the interviewee to discuss whatever they wish and allowing their responses to be fully explored by the interviewer (Kvale, 2006). When responses seem overly superficial, the interviewer can ask follow-up questions for more depth thereby allowing for more in-depth interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee (Dickson-Swift et al., 2007; Legard et al., 2003).

As semi-structured interviews are flexible, they permitted the exploration of topics that were of particular importance to the participants and to the research project. The interview format also allowed responses to be probed and explored and the researcher could respond to issues raised by the participants. The interviews allowed for a good rapport and interaction between the participant and the researcher to develop (Leragd et al., 2003). The interviews, in the

current research project, ranged in length from 30 to 45 minutes. With participants' permission, an audio tape was used to record participants' responses during the interviews. According to Dickson-Swift et al., (2005, p.67), audio tapes "provide a level of detail and accuracy not obtainable from memory or by taking notes". Therefore, audio-taping allowed the researcher sufficient time to note other non-verbal responses such as body language, facial expressions and non-verbal communication during the interview which she noted down after the interviews. The interviews were then transcribed by the researcher after data collection was complete.

Krueger (2015) described a focus group as a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment. As stated by Denscombe (2010, p.179) the comparison of data that can arise through the use of a focus group helps to create an understanding of the different responses around the research topic. One of the reasons for using focus groups was that participants are able to influence and be influenced by others – just as they do in real life. They can brainstorm and generate ideas discussing different angles of a problem and helping each other to identify possible solutions. Data was collected at Howard College Campus. We used empty venues during the forum period for the focus group, which took place once a week for one month. Each meeting lasted 30-45 minutes. Ten members from the 50 participants participated in the focus group while the remaining 40 participated in individual interviews. Interviews also took 30-45 minutes and participants were recruited through social media and through word of mouth as mentioned above (snowballing).

2.7 Validity and reliability

According to Patton (2001), validity and reliability are two factors which any qualitative researcher should be concerned about, from designing to analysing results. The credibility of qualitative research depends on the effort and ability of a researcher. Qualitative validity is based on determining if the findings are accurate from the standpoint/s of the researcher, participant and readers. Triangulation was used to cross validate the data shared by the informants in this study. Due to the large amount of collected data, not all of it was used. I only used the data that was relevant to the themes of the study. The researchers also made sure that all primary and secondary data was recorded and kept for referral, ensuring that interpretations of the data were stable and transparent (Noble & Smith, 2015, p.3). Lastly, the final thesis will be made available to the public so that future researchers or writers are able to study the research findings (Babbie & Mouton, 2011, p.122). It must be noted that the study does not represent all Black women in South Africa; however it represents a small portion of Howard College campus young Black women.

2.8 Data processing and analysis

Analysing data may be defined as the systematic organising, integrating and examining of information gathered during the data collection process (Neuman, 2011, p.507). Interpretive data analysis involves providing a careful account of the characteristics, processes, connections and contexts which constitute the phenomenon being studied and which is in a language that is closely related to the phenomenon itself (TerreBlanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2004, p.115). Analysis made use of thematic and coded sorting of the research data according to topics and questions discussed during the interview sessions. Coding or thematic analysis involves the arrangement of raw data into conceptual groups and creating themes or concepts based on the issues tackled during the interviews and the key focus of the study (Neuman, 2011, p.510). The first step in analysing data was to find meaning from the collected data by transcribing all the recordings and afterwards coding the interviews. The collected data was analysed manually as the coded information was in my field notes and transcribed data. Gibson (2006) argued that coding refers to the assembling or grouping of data according to the likeness of responses. Participants' responses were coded according to the themes in the interview guide. Furthermore, coding or thematic analysis involves the arrangement of raw data into conceptual groups and creating themes or concepts based on the issues tackled during the interviews and key focus of the study (Neuman, 2011, p.510). Thematic analysis did not only assist the researcher to sort the raw data, it also improved the manner in which participant details could be disentangled. It further enabled the researcher to conceptualise and make sound conclusions from the responses more easily.

2.9 Ethical considerations

A gatekeeper letter, to permit the researcher to conduct research, accompanied by ethical clearance, which described the study and methodology of the study, was sent to the School of Social Sciences outlining the request to conduct research. Ethical clearance was approved by the higher degrees ethics committee of UKZN on 1 September 2017.

The researcher informed the participants about the study. Participants were assured that ethical considerations such as confidentiality would be upheld, through informed consent. They signed an informed consent letter which appropriately informed them about the study, what would be expected from them as participants, all the terms and conditions of participation and the contact details of all relevant stakeholders (researcher, supervisor and research office). The informed consent letters were read together with the researcher before being signed by the participants who were also given an opportunity to ask questions.

The researcher assured participants that the information given by them would not be disclosed, unless participants gave permission. Confidentiality and anonymity was ensured; participants' names and identities were replaced with pseudonyms and any distinguishing characteristics were disguised for the purposes of anonymity. There was no risk of undue

harm to participants and I was conscious of protecting informants against questions that could evoke unwanted feelings as body image issues can be a sensitive topic to women. It was made clear to the participants that agreeing to take part in the study was completely voluntary and that refusing to participate or withdrawing from the study was allowed would not affect them negatively. As Orb et al. (2000) asserted, the desire to participate in a research study depends upon a participant's willingness to share his or her experience. It was made clear at the outset that there were no rewards or financial remuneration for participating.

2.10 Limitations of the study

Doing a qualitative ethnographic study had its challenges. Individual interviews were time consuming, particularly the large number. I was residing at home and could not travel to campus every day due to financial reasons. It was even more challenging with the focus group: to get participants together, to get them to co-operate, to focus; some would not arrive and others made excuses or had to leave early. This limited the data gathered and its accuracy. It helped that I had had some experience with a smaller focus group; it was difficult dealing with a larger number of members. Considering the high number of students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, the small sample chosen for the study was not totally representative of the population. A qualitative study requires a small sample. Finally, it must be noted that some of the participants may have mis-represented the truth about their true feelings.

2.11 Theoretical framework

2.11.1 Social constructionism theory

At the core of human existence lies "fundamental mimetism", the tendency to follow the example of others (Larmore & Bowman, 2010, pp. 31-32). Conforming to existing societal conventions and customs and aligning ourselves with the practices of others is as individuals strive to understand themselves and the world. Our thoughts, feelings and desires are thus initially based on thoughts, feelings, desires and fears of others shaped by societies, communities and cultures we live in (Larmore & Bowman, 2010, pp.31-32). McCracken (1987) argued that individuals perceive everything through society and constantly seek meanings around them. Social constructionism takes a critical stance towards the conventional ways of understanding the world and knowledge based on objective, unbiased observation of the world. Instead, the world and its concepts are considered historically and culturally relative. In this way our understanding and knowledge of the world is not a direct perception of reality; instead, individuals construct knowledge and versions of reality as outcomes of social processes and daily interactions between individuals (Burr, 1995).

For women, being beautiful is important for social success (Lowery et al., 2005). Social construction is a theory of knowledge that examines the development of jointly constructed understandings of the world that form the basis for shared assumptions about reality. The social constructionist theory is built upon the observation that many aspects of our daily

experience are shaped by society, in other words, are socially constructed rather than being an objective reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1991). The theory aims to identify the various ways of constructing reality existing in a culture to explore the conditions of their use and to trace the implications for human experience and social practice (Willig, 2001). The theory was appropriate to the study because “beauty” or “normalised beauty” is also socially constructed; it is the people in a society that decide what they see as beauty or as a beautiful “ideal” body. With social constructionism, there is no accuracy because people see things or the world differently, what may be beautiful to someone, may not be beautiful to someone else. Here is a definition of social constructionism from John Shotter and Ken Gergen’s important series of books with a constructionist theme:

[Social constructionism] has given voice to range of new topics, such as the social construction of personal identities; the role of power in the social making of meanings; rhetoric and narrative in establishing sciences; the centrality of everyday activities; remembering and forgetting as socially constituted activities; reflexivity in method and theorizing. The common thread underlying all these topics is a concern with the processes by which human abilities, experiences, commonsense and scientific knowledge are both produced in, and reproduce, human communities. (Shotter and Gergen, 1994, p. i)

Society has constructed a perception of women’s bodies as objects to be desired, gazed upon and constantly recreated (Dworking, 1974; Mulvey, 1975). Because of the value placed on female physical appearance in Western cultures, the majority of studies examining the relationship between media and body image have focused on females (Harrison & Cantor, 1997; Harrison & Fredrickson, 2003; Stice et al., 1994). According to Bordo (1993, p.2364) the ambiguous messages conveyed by society through the media should not mask the extent to which such prescriptions and ideals harm and deter women from their true selves. Internalisation of the media body ideal is an adoption of a socially defined body ideal as a personal standard (Knauss & Paxton, 2008).

2.11.2 Black feminist theory

Feminist scholars ... assert that women share a history of patriarchal oppression through the political economy of the material conditions of sexuality and reproduction. These shared material conditions are thought to transcend divisions among women created by race, social class, religion, sexual orientation, and ethnicity and to form the basis of a women's standpoint with its corresponding feminist consciousness and epistemology. (Collins, 1989, p.756)

The above quote helps to illustrate that all women share a history of patriarchal oppression and that is the driving force behind the Feminist movement. However, Collins employs a non-essentialist view arguing that not all women’s experiences are the same (Collins, 1989). Black feminists have argued that the experiences of Black women are in many ways different from

the experiences of White women and that theirs is in fact linked to a triple oppression regarding race, gender and class (de la Rey, 1997). These layers of oppression make up the experiences of Black women. It is of importance to note that earlier forms of feminism took into consideration the lived experiences of White, middle class women. Therefore under the civil rights movement and the collapse of colonialism in Africa, South America and Asia, women of other races proposed a new form of feminism which took into account the experiences of non-White women (Collins, 1989). Black Feminism did not emerge in the same way as it did in the West as White women were advocating to occupy a space in the public sphere in terms of working outside the home, while Black women had already done so (de la Rey, 1997). White women were in a different social position to Black women (Collins, 1989). Black women have been socio-politically disadvantaged on the grounds of both gender and on race (Collins, 1989).

Generally the concept of Black feminism aims to address racial, sexual, and class discrimination against Black women (Combahee River Collective, 1977). With reference to this study, Black feminism brings into perspective the manner in which Black women struggle with issues regarding beauty in terms of gender, race, ethnicity and class. As such, Black women do not only experience pressures to conform to and maintain beauty standards, but they have to make extra efforts because their skin, hair and bodies often do not fit into society's dominant beauty standards. Feminist theory argues that men and women should be equal politically, economically and socially (Said, 1978). Feminists argue that the manner in which media represents women is oppressive to women because they are represented in an unfavourable manner. Women and their bodies are still placed under great scrutiny and restrictions (Stuart & Donaghue, 2011, p.99) whereas it is different for men. According to Hunter (2002), society considers beauty to be a necessity which women should make every effort to possess as it is thought to vastly improve their quality of life. Therefore women are oppressed and pressured to change their true selves in order to meet the standard of the normalised beauty. Black Feminism considers it essential that the differences and similarities between women of all races be studied, without normalising the dominance or sub-ordination of either one. Black Feminist thought reflects black women's increasing willingness to oppose gender inequality within black civil society (Collins, 2000).

2.12 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the various research methodological tools that were used to collect information for this research. It has given a brief account of the research design, methods of data collection, sampling techniques, population and size as well as data collection instruments (comprising semi-structured interviews and a focus group discussion), data processing and analysis, ethical issues and theories used to construct this research. The following chapter gives a presentation of findings.

CHAPTER 3

THE TRENDING CURVACEOUS BODIES ON INSTAGRAM AND THE EFFECTS OF THIS ON YOUNG BLACK WOMEN

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will probe, describe and engage with the curvaceous body type that is trending on Instagram, and explore how it affects young black women.

3.2 The curvaceous trend on Instagram

A trend can be defined as a general direction in which something is developing or changing; it can be a topic that is the subject of many posts on a social media website or application. The curvaceous/ “thickness” trend that is being referred to on Instagram is made up of larger bottoms with relatively bigger buttocks and hips, large breasts and a tiny waist. As stated in my first chapter, ‘curvy’ is also often linked to plus-size bodies, a term used in clothing stores and the modelling industry to describe women with clothing size 12 and up (Driessen, 2016). What is always evident in the different definitions of curvy is that the body has distinct curvy shapes, such as breasts and hips that are bigger than average. However in my analysis of the curvaceous body ideal, I will mainly focus on the definition that links curvy to the hourglass shape as portrayed on Instagram. The plus-size body definition of curvy is not applicable in this research. Maryanne (2005) defined curvaceous as the degree of “hourglass” shape as determined, for example, by the size of the bust, relative to the circumference of the hips and waist, and the size of buttocks.

3.3 Participants’ views on being trendy

The women in this study, as stated in the previous chapter, are between the ages 18-30. They are all Black UKZN students, studying at Howard College campus. All participants stated that their appearance is very important to them; as stated in previous chapter, Howard College campus girls/women care about their image and like to be referred to as “glamorous”, making them relevant subjects for this study.

My appearance is very important to me. I like to dress well, smell good and be clean all the time I believe that as a human you should always look presentable.[Mbali]

My appearance means everything to me, I believe that the most common way that people get to see who you are is through your appearance, therefore I always try by every means possible to keep it in a representable way that reflects a good mannered and respective individual. [Gugu]

I think people always judge a book by its cover, so for me it's important to always look good, so that when they judge, they see someone who loves herself, clean and presentable and also mutual respect is very important to me, you can just respect me from what you see. I always make sure I wear things that suit me and appropriate for my body so that I feel good at all times.[Zinhle]

The participants stressed the importance of looking good at all times and being presentable. They all agreed that appearance and how people see them was important. We also discussed the trending bodies on Instagram – all participants agreed that curvaceous/thick bodies are trending on Instagram; however, not all participants felt affected by the trend. I was impressed with the confidence of some participants and how they have learnt to accept themselves the way they are despite the beauty trends. However, some participants did contradict themselves during interviews and debates during the focus group sessions as to how they feel about trending curvaceous bodies.

Curvy women are glorified on Instagram and it does affect me a little because sometimes I feel like I could also get that attention and all the glory but on the other hand I learned that I should love and accept my body the way it is because there is nothing I can do to change it, and hating it won't get me as far as loving it. Also I am aware that Instagram is full of a lot of artificial people and exaggerated beauty behind that filter, make-up and weave which makes a person look different. Most people do not look exactly the same as they look in pictures. In a way they do intimidate me but honestly I have never compared myself with them because we are different individuals from different worlds with different intentions, I know that I am not them and never will I be them. I learned to embrace my body the way God made it because he makes no mistakes and we are all created in his image so hating myself is a total disrespect in his eyes. [Snenhlahla]

Snenhlahla (22 years old) was a very confident young lady who has learnt to love herself the way she is. She felt that curvy women are glorified on Instagram and while she would also like that attention, she loves and accepts her body the way it is. Importantly, she was also aware that there beauty on Instagram can be artificial and exaggerated and people in real life do not look the way they look on pictures, especially without make-up. She did confess to feeling a little intimidated. Her comment echoes the sentiments expressed in Wood's (1994) statement that the manner in which women are often presented in the media or pictures deviates from what is known to be normal. Thus what the social media depicts, especially those of celebrities, may not be a true reflection of reality. Snenhlahla was not the only participant interested in attention; Phindile (25 years of age) had something similar to say:

Yes, I do agree that they are trending on the gram, and yes I do want an hourglass body but I don't want bigger breasts or anything. I rather just have a flat belly and a tiny waist. Instagram doesn't just tell us what to look like, it

shows us who we should look like. Constantly reminds you that you're not heavy or thick enough hence you have less followers making you less relevant. Everyone wants to be relevant, famous and simply loved even if it's by people that you don't know or never met. Their likes on social media is all that counts. If you have more likes or comments, if you trend then it means you are more beautiful. It means you're loved and you matter, you feel validated, therefore you are part of this world. And if you have no followers or likes like us, then you don't matter, nobody notices you, you are not beautiful enough, and that is the most heartbreaking feeling, it is not cool at all. I think if I had more likes like trending women, maybe I would think otherwise or appreciate myself more, but nje (just) I want that tiny waist girl (she laughs) like yours, not this (pointing at her stomach). I must say though, it's kind of amazing that seeing social media appreciate our thickness in turn it seems like the media or people have finally accepted our kind of pretty or beauty.

Phindile agreed that curvaceous women are trending on Instagram and she would love to have an hourglass body. She felt that people's likes and followers on Instagram makes a person relevant ("are all that counts"); it means they get attention as noted by Snenhlahla. In a study done by Clark and Tiggemann (2008), it was found that the desire to please and the importance of being liked by others impacted on appearance satisfaction levels in girls (Clark & Tiggemann, 2008). In other words, the more girls are focused on how they look, the more they will be preoccupied with their body image and have increased levels of body dissatisfaction. Grabe et al. (2008) found that many girls measure self-worth by their appearance. Stice and Whitenton (2002) noted that often young females associated being thin with the rewards of social acceptance and academic success. "Many [young women] become preoccupied with the quest for physical perfection as an avenue to attention and approval from others" (Rudd et al., 2000, p. 154). Phindile commented on how good it was to see the trends of Black women as ideals for a change rather than White women. Instagram is a platform therefore that allows Black women to appreciate their bodies.

The issue of likes was consistent with a study done by Wallis (2015) where it was clear that number of likes definitely played an important role for participants, with almost half of the participants indicating that they felt dissatisfied if a picture they uploaded of themselves did not receive a large number of likes. When it came to feelings of jealousy about a friend's photo receiving more likes, participants indicated that overall, they did not feel very jealous, though approximately 34.2% of the participants did feel jealous. Overall, participants felt they needed between 30 and 40 likes on a photo in order to feel satisfied. This could mean that participants may also perceive likes as approval, which could determine levels of self-esteem. Most of my participants did not use the term like or mentioned the importance of the number of likes on social media since it was not part of the interview questions; most used the term being relevant/trend. Most participants stated that they would also like to trend or be relevant which means having more followers and receiving more likes.

Khethi: *I am affected by the trending curvaceous bodies on Instagram, kwanami nje ngyajima ngenza ama squats nemlenze njalo ukuze ngibe ne booty (even I exercise, I do squats and legs everyday so that I will have bigger buttocks). You see with Instagram, they are not only making us jealous of these big booties, but they are constantly showing us ways to get bigger butts through squats, they show us the befores and after and that it is doable and we must do it if we also want to get these booties and trend. And for me it is more than just curvy women that I am affected by, I feel the pressure when it comes to fashion, I want to look like these slay queens but I think I am getting there. I like trends anyway but they are very costly because they come and go in a short period of time, you just have to keep up with the trends and u got to have a good pocket too but since I am currently a student it is very hard."* Kuningi engikuthatha ku istagram (there's a lot that I take from Instagram), the new trends on insta, or basically how I wear or what to buy I always go to Instagram and see ukuth yin engenisile (and see what is trending). And I think a lot of people take from Instagram as well, especially la e (here at) Howard phela hlezi sibabona be trenda ku insta, behamba izindawo (we always see them trending on instagram, going places), even my friends take from insta. Not long ago we hosted a party for my friend and the theme of the party, the set-up, outfits to wear and everything we got from Instagram, there's a lot man that you get from insta, and like I said you have to have the money to fit in and be like other kids. (Laughing) hee I had to borrow money to attend that party, because I was broke. and trust me it's the worst thing, in fact it's hard to tell your friends you won't be making it because you don't have money, you can't always be making excuses you just have to be part of them or else your friends will start thinking uzenza ncono (you think you are better) you know, it's hard.

Khethi (24 years old) appeared to be a very bubbly girl. She was affected by the trends on Instagram and was doing squats everyday so that she could grow bigger buttocks. She said she is not only affected by the body trends but also by fashion trends; this was evident from the outfit she was wearing: a trendy laced black top tucked into jeans with a red flower design and pointy, flat black shoes and triangular sunglasses. She said she uses Instagram to find clothing to buy. She shared a story of how she and her friends got the ideas of her friend's party from Instagram, the theme, set up, clothes etc.

Lindi (20 years old, calm and down to earth) was also affected by the curvaceous bodies on Instagram. She was slim, but wished to have bigger breasts and buttocks:

I am affected by the thick curvaceous bodies on Instagram, I mean there is too much competition amongst us women, we all want to be the best so there is high pressure to look like those women. I would like to have bigger breasts and ass... ngisho nala nje eskoleni , amantombazane aya show offa ngemzimba

yawo emihle ngath I competition, futh you'd swear ukuth aziyi ukuyo attenda lezizngane (Even here at Howard, girls show off with their beautiful bodies it is like a competition, you would swear that they are not going to attend lectures), it's like they are going elsewhere. I pressure nje ikhona (there is pressure).

Lindi shared that on Howard campus , women show off their beautiful bodies, in the sense that they wear outfits that reveal their bodies. And it seemed to her that they are competing with each other which made her feel a sense of pressure. Thobeka felt differently:

Well I'm not affected by their bodies. Slay queens have nice bodies and all but I believe that women are beautiful in their unique ways. We have beautiful slim bodies with small breasts and no hips, and we have chubby women with fat tummies, we have ladies with stretch marks and cellulite. All kinds of bodies are beautiful, we as women should embrace our different bodies and we should not want perfect bodies. Thick leyonce from Instagram is a perfect role model in social media, she has built confidence in a lot of women who are fat, she has shown that it is okay to be fat and it does not make you any less attractive if you are fat. I don't have a problem with my small breasts and small ass, I would never want to change my body.

According to Thobeka (27 years old), curvy women are trending and she referred to them as 'slay queens', a term used on social media referring to popular women. Thobeka stated that however she is not affected by the trend. Thobeka was confident and comfortable in in her own skin and felt that women's bodies are different and women should embrace those differences. She mentioned 'Thick leyonce' who is a full figured model, famous on Instagram, who posts pictures of herself half naked despite her size. She was discussed in the focus group as a good role model who sent out the message that we should embrace our different bodies. She does, however, receive considerable social criticism and has to defend herself continually.

Society should accept differences in women, differences of body shapes and not bring women down for being themselves and embracing their true bodies, because this makes women want to conform to ideal bodies. Thobeka claimed it wasn't important for her to meet Instagram standards:

I don't want to end up having sugar daddies who will give me money to meet the Instagram standard, I am cool with being basic. The things slay queens do to get the money and slay hhay ngyakutshela wena (I am telling you), you have no idea. But maybe if you have twitter you will know". Then she told me a story, "there was this slay queen who was exposed by a guy on twitter who actually sells herself for money on Instagram through direct messaging, and she also organizes girls for men if they want more than one woman. So this guy screen shot a conversation they had with this woman discussing the exchange of herself for money as well as other girls, in other words she was prostituting herself. The guy asked questions like how much for a night, how much two

women would cost, and if they can travel to wherever he is and when they can do it and all that, and the women would respond. So this guy exposed this girl and confirmed that *slay queens* go through all that just to get money and *slay*, in his post he wrote that he was even ashamed that their sisters have stood themselves so low, they care so much about the money that they don't even care about their safety. He could've been a serial killer but they are willing to go where he lives without any questions and there's no assurance of their safety, mind you they are going to a person they do not know and never met, like really?? *Hhey awazi wena* (hey, you have no idea), you should join twitter, they talk about everything there. So ya (yes) I'm good the way I am and I won't try to fit in, even though I make sure that the pictures I post on insta are on point but I wouldn't go out of my way to meet the standard on Instagram. This story indicates that some people will do anything to be relevant on Instagram.

Thobeka was not the only confident one who was not affected by the trending curvaceous bodies on Instagram. Liso stated that women are different, beautiful in their own ways:

I am not affected by the trending curvaceous body on Instagram, however it motivates me to lead a healthier lifestyle. I am mostly satisfied with my body and I always try to be healthier, and continuously motivated to lose a few inches. I feel that I could be healthier and more in shape, at the same time I don't feel like I'm out of shape. When I view images of other women on Instagram I don't feel less attractive or anything like that. If a woman is attractive she should be given credit. I believe that every individual possesses features that contribute to the physical beauty.

In the focus group I mixed participants, both slim and those with fuller figures because both these groups, according to my description of curvy, do not meet the "ideal" curvy shape. According to Snothile, who had a relatively full figure,

Of course curvaceous bodies are trending on Instagram, but I wouldn't say I am affected by instagram per se. I've always had issues with my body. Sometimes I am ok with it, but sometimes I just gain too much weight in such a way that I fail to look at myself in the mirror, and when I am like that I do not even want to take selfies. Currently I think I am a size 38 because 36 doesn't fit me anymore, I don't even want to buy new outfits because I refuse to admit that I am a size 38 [everybody laughed, including herself]. So I would really love to lose some weight. I would kill to be a size 32 I swear.

Snothile was one of my participants with a fuller figure, who participated in my focus group and who always had something funny to say. She did not mind talking at all and she was always ready to break the ice in the group. The idea was to get an insight into how women with fuller figures feel. Snothile said she was not happy with her weight and was desperate to be a size 32. This comment was made after another participant [Zethu] who was a size 32

was saying that she would love to gain weight! Sometimes we may like things or wish to have what other people have, only to find that those who have that wish to get rid of it.

Thembeke (aged 25 years) was affected by the trending bodies on Instagram did not like her own slim body:

I think I am affected by these bodies on Instagram because now I am not happy with my slim body, at all. I remember after I gave birth two year ago, I was very happy with my body because I had gained weight in the right places like ama hips ne zinqa and big titties too, veleke phela asuke egcwele ubisi (she laughs), but I loved it, everything except for the stomach. But I've always had big ass, it just grew bigger. And funny enough I used to hate it because I thought it was too big for my body because I used to be so skinny, but now I love my ass coz it's in style. Ey ngangimncane (I was slim) and now am slowly going back to that weight because I keep on losing weight and I hate it. I always try and eat fatty foods so that I can gain weight, ngidla ama fried nama gwinya (I eat fried chips, and fat cookies) like often so that ngizo gainer (so that I will gain), but it's not working. When I am skinny I look sick, so I hate it.

Thembeke admitted that she was affected by the trending bodies on Instagram and that she did not like her slim body. She said that she ate a lot of unhealthy food to gain weight which is not wise thing as unhealthy eating causes many sicknesses. Despite a person's weight, it is always a good choice to eat healthy food for health reasons and purposes, a view I shared with Thembeke. The model by Stice et al. (1996) proposed that ideal body internalisation, body mass, and perceived pressure leads to body dissatisfaction which provokes both dietary restraint and negative affect. Similar to Thembeke, Nongcebo also admitted to being affected by the curvy ideal and had this to say:

I am affected by these bodies on Instagram, I am a size 4 and 6, and body shaming for skinny girls is real. I do wish I was a bit curvier, I wish that some tops and pants would fit better, because these curvy women really look good on clothes when they are wearing them, they fit them better.

3.4 'Body shaming'

Nongcebo is an 18 year old first year student. She admitted to being affected by curvaceous body trends, and she described the process of 'body shaming', that it is real for skinny girls, as she was talking from experience. As we talked further she said "people are so harsh out here, umuntu eth nje angfuni into oybonayo nje ukuth iyafa, ngiwenzeni amathambo? (A person would say, I don't want something that you see is dying, what should I do with skeletons?). Or a person would call you a stick or whatever they want and it is worse on social media because people hide behind their cell phones, they take advantage that you do not know them and will probably never meet them so they say whatever they like, and they don't

care.” Those were really harsh things to hear, but this does appear to happen often. Body shaming on its own may cause body dissatisfaction in people: one can think one is all right and the next person may come and tell one otherwise, say negatives thing about which if one hears often enough, one ends up believing and disliking oneself. Then one sees images of other women that are considered “ideal” and feels the pressure to look like those ideal women.

Nokwe, who was part of the focus group, had this to add regarding the issue of body shaming:

The problem starts when people make fun of your body, that’s when you think something is wrong with you. And also people make comparisons with pictures of maybe a slim girl and a curvy girl and people will start making a joke of a slim girl, especially males. Black men usually say they like something to hold onto in a woman, so if you are skinny it is like you are not woman enough and they make fun of you.

Body shaming has become a serious issue in our society. Body shaming can be defined as inappropriate, negative statements and attitudes towards another person’s weight or size. It is a form of bullying and humiliation and it can lead to short and long term psychological and health related issues. Body shaming occurs in three main ways: criticising yourself, criticising someone else in front of them and criticising someone else behind their back. Mukwamu (2017) stated that, in an age where media and social media are easily accessible, there is a strong emphasis on idealised beauty on platforms such as Instagram, magazines and television. Seeing celebrities and models who are thought to have “perfect bodies”, individuals start to become critical of their own bodies and succumb to the pressure of living up to somewhat unrealistic standards. Nongcebo had also mentioned the issue of clothes not fitting well because she was “skinny”. Phumla had something similar to say:

I would agree that indeed curvaceous bodies are trending on Instagram. I’m very much affected because I’m a slim person with no curves, so seeing curvaceous and thick bodied people trending on Instagram like it’s nobody’s business somehow makes me wish that I was like them so that I can slay with my thick body. Sometimes I do wish that I had wider hips and a tiny waist so that I will look good when wearing nice clothes. Not that I don’t but sometimes my mindset thinks that I would have looked much better if I had hips and a tiny waist.

Phumla also felt that curvaceous bodies or women are trending on Instagram and she was affected by the trend and wished she had a thick body so she could slay (trend). She also said that she would look much better in clothes if she had the curvaceous ideal. They say “if you look good, you feel good and if you feel good, you do well”. So feeling bad about the way you look may make one feel negative, and do negative/bad. Samke had something similar to say when it comes to clothing.

I am definitely affected by the curvaceous bodies, I mean have you seen them duh, I am jealous even, like dude I literally have a man's chest, it's not even funny. So when I see those women flaunting their cleavages I feel bad and you know some outfits just require you to have a boob, it may fit well and all but lack a boob. I think that is the biggest thing I want, and lately women have been showing off their boobs, wearing outfits without wearing bras, I mean how do you not get jealous of that? Like dude it's crazy. And then some bit of ass, (laughing) is it too much to ask for?

Samke said that she is affected by the curvaceous bodies, especially when it comes to the breasts because she does not have breasts and she gets jealous when other women are flaunting their breasts. She stressed that there are some outfits that she does not wear but would love to wear, as she lacks the breasts. She was also unhappy with her small buttocks. Thaka admitted to comparing herself to other women on Instagram and that results in her feeling or thinking that her body is not beautiful enough:

Curvaceous bodies are trending and I am affected by the trend because whenever I see someone who has a nice curvaceous and sexy body I just wish to be like her. Actually I love all my body parts, I think the problem starts when I see someone with a nice looking body than mine, then I feel like mine is not nice.

If Thaka is by herself and not comparing herself to anyone, she likes all her parts of her body and believes that she has a nice body. She said if she sees a curvaceous and sexy body, she wishes should could look like that person. Richins (1991) reported that comparisons lead to increased levels of attractiveness standards and decreased body satisfaction levels. Social comparison behaviour leads to "guilt, shame, stress, unhappiness, insecurity, and body dissatisfaction" and in some cases is directly linked to bulimic and anorexic behaviors (Rudd et al., 2000, p. 155). This is similar to the study done by Posavac, Posavac and Posavac (1998), which stated that in the majority of the young women studied, media images caused them to inherently compare themselves to the women that they viewed in these images, and in doing so, body satisfaction decreased and weight concern increased. However, in my study it is social media (Instagram) images that cause them to compare themselves to other women. The comparisons often result in negative feelings. Wallis (2015) noted that countless studies have shown that comparison behaviour to media images in young women leads to increased attractiveness standards and body dissatisfaction. Now social media is the new threat to body dissatisfaction. Young women are left feeling inadequate and inferior to the overly perfected, highly attractive, and curvaceous women seen on Instagram.

Punkie (22 year old) is an attractive slim size 28 who said she said she was not affected by the trending curvaceous body on Instagram:

They are trending but I am not affected by the trend, I love my body, I wouldn't trade it for anything because I am a model today because of it, and this body is

going to take me far. I have received many compliments regarding my body and for me, it has been a confirmation that I have a good body as slim as it is. And on Instagram I have like a thousand followers, and I receive many likes and that makes me feel good about myself, it shows that people like me for who I am and the photos I take, it is not about shapes or sizes.

Punkie said she loves her body and would not trade it for anything in the world. As a model, she receives many compliments about her body and has many followers and many likes on Instagram. This is confirmation that she has a good body and people like her for who she is and her photos, for her it is not about the size. Amahle on the other hand is unsure of what she is affected by:

Yes they are trending ... (hesitating) to some extent I'm affected by the bodies that I see on Instagram. However, I'm not sure if it's the curvaceous bodies in particular that really affect me, but I wish that I could make my thighs more firm, fit and healthy like the ones I see there. I've currently gained weight and I feel like I've gained in the right places, like the parts that I would have preferred to gain on, such as hips and ass, but as you can see, let me stand up (standing up) my ass is still very flattish but ja (yes), well except for the stomach. I do mind gaining weight on my belly, and it is also growing. I always try to do sit-ups to get rid of this belly fat. Not long ago I was a size 28 to 30 now I think im a size 32 to 34 and I'm honestly cool with that size but the problem is the cellulite that I've developed since I've gained this weight. I wish to get rid of it because it totally makes me uncomfortable since I feel like I'm limited on what to wear. I was used to wearing short things but now that has changed since I have these cellulites. I also have a problem with my breasts. I don't like their size, I feel like they are too small and ever since I had my first child nje awile (they are sagging) and I don't know what to do to get them back into their shape, I've even googled about it, but nothing is really helping except for bras (rolling her eyes), I really do wish there was something I could do.

Amahle, who is 23 years old, a dark beauty, said that she is unsure if it is the curvaceous bodies in particular that affect her but she wished to make her thighs more firm, fit and healthy, like those of women she sees on Instagram. She mentioned that she had gained weight, and she is happy with the weight she has gained because all the weight went to the right parts of her body like hips and buttocks excluding the stomach. I then teased her and said maybe she does not mind gaining in those parts because those are trending bodies at the moment and she laughed and said maybe. To me she was describing the curvaceous ideal body as she mentioned gaining on the hips, buttocks and losing the stomach, so it appears she is happy because she is slowly achieving this ideal body. Amahle also mentioned that she does not like her breasts since they were small and sagging and she has searched on Google

ways to get back in shape. Ntokozo on the other hand seems not to be affected at all by these trendy bodies and she is happy with her body.

Curvaceous bodies don't affect me, I love the way God created me. I believe I am God's image or rather I am made in his image. And He created me for a reason. So I love my body the way it is, even though some people have made fun of it, like telling me that I need to eat but I love it regardless. Futhi ungenza ngibukeke ngimcane kunalokhu engiyikho (It also makes me look younger than I actually am) (laughing) and I love that about it. People are always surprised when I tell them my age, and they say you look younger, I am sure every woman loves to hear that, that's why some women even hide their age because we don't want to grow older, hhay, asfuni ukuguga (we don't want to age), so I am alright the way I am.

Ntokozo is a 29 year old woman, who asserted that she was not affected by the curvaceous bodies at all. She stated that she was made in God's image and God appeared to play a strong role in her life. She argued that He made her the way He wants, and therefore who is she to not be happy about that and embrace it. She was also happy about the fact that her body makes her look younger than she really is – I was surprised to learn her age. Mpume shared something similar to Ntokozo:

Not really, I am not affected. I think my body is alright, it's not perfect but I am happy with it.

It appears therefore that not all people are easily influenced or affected by trends which come and go, and body wise it may be hard to conform to each and every trend. There are always going to be women who feel left out. In terms of age, the study showed that confidence and self esteem about one's body did not depend on age. There were 18 year-old participants and undergraduates who were confident and not pressured by social media as well as 29 year-olds such as Ntokozo who were also not affected, and vice versa. Both postgraduate and undergraduate participants of varying ages were affected and felt the pressure to conform to an 'ideal' body.

3.5 Some Instagram examples of trendy bodies

Some examples of thick/curvaceous women that are trending on Instagram follow.



♥ 836 likes



♥ 136 likes

Further examples follow of Instagram pictures of women who are trying to conform to the curvaceous bodies trend.



♥ 11 likes



♥ 11 likes

Body image is defined as the way in which an individual views his or her body; it is part of a person's identity and sense of self (Dittmar, 2009). Body image becomes a part of who you

are as a person and can impact everything from self-perception to self-esteem, anxiety, and depression (Kalnes, 2013). Body satisfaction is “the degree of satisfaction with one’s current physical self (size, shape, general appearance)” (Jones, 2001, p. 645). Body image specifically plays a key role in health for adolescent and young adult women (Rudd & Lennon, 2000). Low body image can lead to appearance-management behaviours which include attempting to alter the body through behaviours such as restriction of food intake, exercise, choice in clothing, make-up products, and in more severe cases, cosmetic surgery (Rudd & Lennon, 2000), which will be discussed later in this study. The desire to obtain a curvaceous body and the pressure put on females to look a certain way is often heavily reflected in adolescent and young adult females’ perceptions of their own body image.

Body satisfaction and sense of self is an important issue for many individuals but especially for adolescent and young adult females. As pressure for females to obtain certain body types increases (Rudd et al., 2000), it is worth exploring further the effects social media could have in this area. Body image and the degree of body satisfaction an individual has, not only impacts identity but as described above, can impact self-esteem, mood, and behaviors (Tiggemann, 2006), and sometimes even lead to severe consequences such as eating disorders and mental/physical illnesses (Rudd & Lennon, 2000).

The picture below is an example of padded underwear.



None of the participants mentioned the use of padded, ‘lift up’ and as well as hip enhancer underwear clothing. However this underwear is available and some women want curves and buttocks to the extent that they will buy and wear this kind of underwear. It is therefore evident that there are women who are affected by the curvaceous trend. The underwear on its own sends a message that women can be better versions of themselves, that they are not

good enough as they are; they can add buttocks and look better. Women are made to believe that almost every aspect of their bodies can be made better or more attractive or appealing. A lot of pressure is placed on women, however it is debatable as to where this pressure comes from (this will be discussed further in Chapter 6).

Overall, the participants agreed that curvaceous bodies on Instagram are trending and some women are affected by the trend. Through repeated exposure to images on social media, some women feel pressured and aspire to the trends or beauty ideals. Participants reported considerable interest in beauty trends if not in terms of bodies, then in terms of fashion. This is in contrast with the study done by Shelembe (2016) on the Pietermaritzburg UKZN campus which reported that participants have no interest in beauty trends and standards and do not know or notice any prominent beauty trends and standards on campus. One participant commented that the Pietermaritzburg campus is not as glamorous and active in the beauty and fashion culture as the UKZN campus in Durban (Howard); she felt there was not much pressure to partake in beauty regimes and follow specific beauty standards at the Pietermaritzburg campus. This supports my choice of the Howard college campus for this research (refer to Chapter 2). It was interesting to note that almost all the participants did not state men as reasons for their body dissatisfaction or as those who put pressure on them to look a certain way, but this will be discussed further in Chapter 6. Ribane (2006) argued that conceptions of beauty are rooted in culture; thus, the pressure for women to be beautiful is likely to have stemmed from social discourses around how women should look. In a globalised world where technology makes it easier for people to connect (Odhiambo, 2008), it seems that social media has been influential in dictating how women should look.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter revealed that participants were well aware of the curvaceous trend of women's bodies on Instagram. Some participants were not affected by this trend but most participants seemed to be affected. Results showed that some of the participants had a sense of pride in who they were and their uniqueness and didn't feel the pressure to conform to the bodies seen on Instagram. Some participants were aware that filters can change photos to show unrealistic bodies to which they did not feel they needed to conform. However, the majority of participants felt huge pressure to conform to the curvaceous body standards or ideal on Instagram, especially regarding their buttocks and waists.

CHAPTER 4

WOMEN'S PREFERENCES REGARDING BODY TYPES, SHAPES OR SIZES

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will look at the data gathered regarding young Black women's preferences on body types, shapes or sizes and what influences these preferences.

4.2 Socially constructed preferences

"Social constructivism operates on the premise that social actors try to comprehend their social world and its surroundings" (Creswell, 2013, p. 24). In trying to understand their surroundings as well as their social world, people are believed to establish meanings which are intentionally directed to objects in the lifeworld. According to Harris (2007, p. 232), these meanings are socially constructed and learned, and reinterpreted during social encounters with others. "As a result, all objects within the social world are given meaning based on the relevance that the objects have for people. In addition, these meanings are multiple, and thus require researchers to be open-minded to the multiple interpretations of phenomena" (Majali, 2014, p. 5). I therefore expected the female participants' understanding and perceptions of female beauty and the body to vary in this study because of their diverse social contexts. Participants said that a 'good body' is what makes a woman physically attractive; a good body was defined as a voluptuous body with thick curvaceous buttocks, wide hips, a slim waist and properly proportioned breasts. The shape and size of a woman's body was also said to be an important factor of attractiveness. More than half the participants said that an attractive body for them is being thick, with curves in all the right places. Much emphasis was placed on having thick buttocks and a slim waist.

Social media has been promoting thick curves as an ideal and attractive body. Black women are made to believe that having an hourglass body with exaggerated buttocks is the signature of attractiveness. This has been said to draw women closer to their African heritage and culture, as a curvaceous woman is considered beautiful in many African traditions. However, studies have shown that there is a contradiction in the messages sent because Black women, especially young girls, seem to have a preoccupation with thinness (Pienaar & Bekker, 2007, pp.539-541; White, 2011; Afful & Ricciardelli, 2015; Ayeza, 2008). This study aims to uncover if this statements still holds true, if young women are still preoccupied with being slim or if they are moving with the times and obsessed with the recent curvy trend on social media, their "traditionally preferred" bodies. Young Black women are influenced by Black celebrities whose curvaceous bodies are placed on a pedestal as the epitome of attractiveness; hence a slim waist, big buttocks and hips and rounded breasts are the aspiration. It is also said that some African cultures still have a preference for women with bigger bodies and still perceive a woman with a bigger body as having higher prestige than one with a smaller body to the extent that some young Black women are subjected to various fattening methods in order to

obtain a socially and cultural attractive body (Fredrick, 2008, p.202; Mwaba & Roman, 2009). Studies on different racial perceptions of body shape and size have shown that even though concerns and preoccupations with body shape and size are present across all races, young Black women seem to be less drawn towards the perception that thinness is attractive (Fredrick, 2008; Mwaba & Roman, 2009; Grabe & Hyde, 2006). This is evident as black curvy women are now flaunting their bodies, they are a recent trend on social media, and a potential cause of body dissatisfaction for some women. Most participants also preferred these bodies for various reasons.

4.3 Participants' body preferences

Mbewo:

I prefer the medium body size with a little bit of curves or wear size 32/34. Because I am really sick of wearing the small size I would like to be much thicker so that I would wear my clothes with pride. There are types of clothes that I don't wear because of my body. I am the very skinny type and I don't usually show my legs because they are very skinny.

Phindi:

I like or prefer the curvaceous body (thick-ish) because it's the in thing right now, and unlike the skinny body, I feel like it's more accommodating to my kind of people (Blacks/African). We are naturally thick and it's kind of amazing seeing the social media appreciate our thickness. In turn it seems like the media has finally accepted our kind of pretty or beauty.

Thalente:

Thick body, ubukeka kahle (it looks good).

Monica:

I prefer to be medium, fit and healthy.

Khethi:

I prefer your 'Sbahle Mpisane' kinda body (thick and fit). Her body is everything and more. Sooo perfect.

Nosipho:

(laughing) I prefer the hourglass shape, curvy with a small waist and also fit. I think Sbahle Mpisane and Boity Thulo have done a great job in showing that women can be curvy, healthy and fit all at the same time as people believe that a person is healthy if only she is slim.

Zandi:

I prefer an average body, not too slim big either, just medium and in shape like (drawing the hourglass using hands), you see.

Nongcebo:

I prefer my own body, I like my body the way it is, as slim as it is, I like it.

Snothile:

I prefer a slim body, I think slim bodies are very nice, and those girls can wear short shorts, anything they like, and show their bellies. I'd love to have that body maybe size 30 -32 just like Bonang Matheba, not too skinny.

Lelo:

I don't want to be fat, I don't want to be small I want to be like Sbahle Mpisane, I want to have a figure, I want to have bums athe ukqinaqina nje (that are firm, strong buttocks) you know. I think people appreciate that body more, especially males, the comments they make about these bodies, also when I go out with my friends males are likely to approach my friend who has this curvy body. On Instagram also they get about 1000, 4000 likes and I get about 30 likes so I want this body as well. My boyfriend is also obsessed with this girl, always complementing her body, and he always takes pictures of this girl from insta and save them on his phone and that makes me jealous of her so I want Sbahle's body and slay with it.

Seventeen participants said they preferred their own body shape and size, whether or not it fitted into social media's or Instagram's dominant beauty standard. Thirty-two said they prefer being curvy, hourglass or thick, with big round buttocks, wide hips, small waist and round breasts in proportion to their hips, including those who had stated that they were happy with their bodies earlier and were not affected by the trends. Almost all participants emphasized the importance of having curves and a small waist; furthermore, they highlighted that being overly skinny like the women portrayed in women's magazines was not desirable. One participant said she preferred a skinny body shape and she is not skinny. About five participants mentioned Sbahle Mpisane, wanting or wishing to look like her and admiring her body. It seems as if Sbahle Mpisane has a big influence, she has a body that most young black women wish to have. It was argued that a skinny body has always been desirable and preferable because it was or still is an indication of good health and wealth, as opposed to the traditional African perception that considers a bigger body as an indication of good health and wealth. They further said that the thick and curvy body has been linked with ill-health and obesity, however Sbahle Mpisane has proved that a thick or curvy person can be curvy, healthy and fit at the same time. As stated in previous chapters, traditionally South Africans associate curvaceous with beauty, health, wealth, higher social status, happiness, and affluence; this still holds true in some parts of present day South Africa (Muris, Meesters, van de Blom & Mayer, 2005, p.2). Similarly, McGarvey (1991) added that in many traditional, non-Western settings, it is argued that body fat is believed to be an indicator of wealth and prosperity with obesity as a symbol of economic success, femininity and sexual capacity (Ghannam, 1997; Nasser, 1988). In Black African communities, being slim or skinny has often been associated with disease, misery and poverty, but has become the prominent beauty ideal in most societies (Muris et al., 2005, p.2), as opposed to western perceptions. Social constructivism postulates that an individual's subjective experience of the social world stems

from their social interaction with others through social encounters (Gergen & Gergen, 2000, cited in Allen, 2010, p.68). It can then be assumed that what female participants know as well as understand about beauty is a result of social interaction with others. It is through social interaction that meanings are attached to beauty. These meanings are then subjectively negotiated and interpreted by individuals in relation to the society's conceptions of beauty (in this case, body ideals).

4.4 Probing the use of extreme exercise and diets to change body shapes

Women seem prepared to use extreme exercise and diets to change their body shapes to conform to a more attractive ideal. This is illustrated in the post below by Isabella (2017) at femnique.com:

*Here is the plain truth, a well-toned curvy female body is very attractive. The curves of the female body are so feminine and it's very mesmerizing to look at. That's why when curvy celebrities like Kim Kardashian or Beyoncé's Instagram pictures, they normally get millions of likes because people love to look at it. Having an hourglass figure was one of the most sought after shapes in 2016 and will be continuing in 2017. After reading this post you will have a clear direction on how to get a curvy body the right way. Having a curvy body or hourglass figure is the ultimate look of femininity that was made popular by the late Marilyn Monroe and other 60 female Hollywood icons. To get a curvy body your waist needs to be small, your hips and bust needs to be slightly wider and your butt must be lifted. The **guide** to a curvy body is as follows:*

Step 1: shed the excess weight by doing cardio

*For true curves to show, you need to lose the excess body fat that is hiding them. That's why the first step is to lose the excess body fat. Cardio is just a type of exercise that will help to burn through the calories that you ate through the day. Note: **if you are slim and have a petite body structure skip this step** because the purpose of doing cardio in this case is to help you lose weight. It does not make sense for a slim person to lose more weight as that will cause you to become anorexic and it's very unhealthy.*

Step 2: it's time to slim your waist

An hourglass figure or curvy body isn't complete without a well-toned belly and a small waist because that is what will help to give you that curvy look from top to bottom. One of the most critical things you must understand when trying to get a small waist is that strength training and diet plays a very important role.

Step 3: start toning your upper body (shoulders, chest and arms)

If you want to get a curvy body or hourglass figure, your upper body must be in good shape. For your upper body to be properly toned, you must increase your lean muscle mass which involves doing strength training, cardio and healthy eating. By focusing on your upper body it will help your body to have the best upper body to lower body weight ratio. Make sure you do not skip your upper body workout routines.

Step 4: Sexify your butt and thighs

Do butt and thigh exercises every other day.** The reason to do it every day is because your butt and thigh muscles will need time to recover and grow. **Do some strength training exercises.** This isn't a must but it's one of the best workouts you can do to help tone your butt and thigh muscles. Lastly, **Exercise to tone your hip muscle.

Step 5: how to make your hips wider

Make sure to consume a meal every 3 to 4 hours. This will help you eat more calories without you feeling overly stuffed. **Choose only healthy foods.** Instead of eating white rice go for brown rice. Eat foods that are rich in fiber such as wheat bread, mixed nuts and vegetables. **Drink your protein shakes.** Protein shakes will help you to ensure that any extra weight that you gain will go to your muscles and not stored as fat. **Use the right amount of weights,** don't use weights that are too light or too heavy, but you can increase the weights as you go along to stay challenged.

According to Agu (2017), a workout for a skinny girl aiming to get big buttocks or some curves, includes squats, jumps and lunges. A one-day workout sample follows:

<i>exercise</i>	<i>break</i>	<i>sets</i>	<i>reps</i>
<i>Warm up and stretch</i>			
<i>Squat with weight</i>	<i>2 minutes</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>5-12</i>
<i>Bent over rows</i>	<i>1 minute</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>5-12</i>
<i>Lunge side jumps</i>	<i>2 minutes</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Dips</i>	<i>1 minute</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Overhead rows with squat</i>	<i>2 minutes</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>5-12</i>
<i>Stretch</i>			

Agu added that, for one to gain weight, one needs to rest and learn to manage stress in a positive way and yoga is a good form of relaxation. Also, it is important to rest in between set as that will help a person regain the energy one needs to finish the workout. Lastly, everyday a person has to eat right, and then 4 to 5 times a week a person must exercise, or workout and they will achieve the desired results.

Instagram has proven that it is possible to gain weight from slim or fat to become curvy or create an hourglass shape through diets and workout/ exercises. People exercise for various reasons; to gain weight, lose weight, keep in shape, to be fit, but being curvy requires combining it all, depending on a person's weight. Losing weight or gaining muscles is not an easy task; it takes time. Usually people want to see the results in a short period of time and therefore end up engaging in extreme exercises and workouts.

Extreme dieting may be defined as endorsing extreme measures like cutting out an entire food group, extreme calorie restrictions or taking a magic pill for the pounds to miraculously fall

off. In other words, extreme diets will sacrifice health for a temporary loss of weight. And this often leads to the effect where a person will lose a lot of weight only to gain it back. The end result is that this person puts their health at risk. Extreme exercise can be based upon duration of workouts and exercise intensity levels (Johnston, 2017). Over exercising can decrease your performance and increase your injury risk. It can cause short-and long-term side effects and even lead to heart damage. Excessive exercise, like extreme diets, attracts people who feel an extreme need for control in their lives, like weight reduction and muscle gain (Allen, 2018)

Although a few participants admitted to having tried either extreme diet or exercise, most participants claimed they tried regular diet and exercising. Squat workouts have been the most talked about, shown or famous workout on Instagram for making buttocks bigger and there has been many posts of videos and pictures posted by people to confirm that squats really do create bigger buttocks and to show people how they work out. Agu (2017) claimed a perfect squat required standing with your feet, hip width apart and your head straight. Your back should be straight, not rounding or arching. Your stomach tucked in and tight. Gently drop your buttocks down as if there is a chair behind you and you want to sit down on it. Pictures on Instagram mostly show people's before and afters of squatting and eating healthily. Below is an example of an Instagram picture, a black woman who shows her transformation from 2015, 2016 and 2017 through exercising and eating well. Participants also stated how much they try workouts/exercises and diet to increase body parts such as buttocks, and many focused on the buttocks and building a tiny waist.



Images like the one above and messages encourage people to believe that it is indeed doable to develop beautiful figure. The above picture was showed to me by one of the participants [Khethi]; she said it motivates her to work hard in gym, eat healthily and just keep pushing.

Khethi admitted to doing workouts and dieting to change her body:

Yes. I am still a 'work under construction' even now, if you know what I mean. It was back in 2016, I was a size 38 going to 40, and I knew it was about time I took a stand. So my friend told me about this product called Herbalife, she was also using it at the time so I trusted it. So I started eating clean, cut down on a looot of things, joined gym, I went in hard to get to size 34 but I am a 32/34 now (sticking tongue out, and making a funny face), I am happy now but I am currently focused on building my butt, so I do my squats every day, and I look at Instagram pictures and videos for motivation.

As she was telling her story of how she lost weight, she could tell I was and motivated by what she had to say. I am aware that people lose weight all the time but I could not believe she had been a size 38 and worked that hard to lose weight. I was motivated to think that I could do this too and that I should try gym again. Khethi also stated that she was currently trying to build bigger buttocks by doing squat exercises every day. Mbewo stated that she has never gone on a diet, however she has tried exercising:

I have never gone for diet, but I have tried exercising because I have stomach fats. I tried exercising not because I wanted to change the way I look but I wanted to get rid of the stomach fats. I wanted my waist to be very tiny because I am slim already, so I wanted my stomach to match my body size.

Mbewo stated that she has never gone on a diet, however she has tried exercising and she wanted to get rid of stomach fat. It was not because of instagram, but she wanted her stomach to match her body since she was slim. Similar to Mbewo, Thoblile (26 years of age) also tried to flatten her stomach through both dieting and exercising:

Yes I have tried both dieting and exercising because I wanted to have a flat stomach, develop curves and be sexy, but it didn't happen. I failed to keep up to both the diet and exercising, these things really want someone who is dedicated, umuntu osaziyo istori sakhe (someone who knows their strory). I have given up now, I really cannot keep up to the gym, ngamane nglale nginje impilo yami yonke (I'd rather stay this way for the rest of my life), gym is not for me. Ezinye izinto nje zinabantu bazo (Some things are just meant for certain people), and gym is one of them, it's not for everyone (laughing), like mathematics, like playing soccer, do you get? Ya (yes) so it's one of those things.

Thobile who was 26 years old, very outspoken and free spirited, stated that she has tried both dieting and exercising with the aim of flattening her stomach and building a curvy sexy body. She said that she failed to do this, as she could not keep up with dieting and exercising and she believes that it is not for her. She made her point by giving practical examples which I found both funny and true. Not everything is for everyone.

Even though I've never went on a strict diet and all of the so called diets, I've gone on crashed. I gained immediately after I stopped crash diet (laughing). I have also exercised for a week, at most. I wanted to look like Minnie Dlamini-Jones and I still do.

By 'gone on crashed', she meant that she had gone on a crash diet, when one tries to lose weight very fast in a short period of time by eating very little or basically starving yourself. A crash diet may also refer to extreme dieting. According to Johannsen (2015), a crash diet is essentially a very restrictive meal plan that's unsustainable for the long term. Phindile also admitted that she tried exercising for a week before getting lazy and tired of it. She said she wished to look like one of the finest icons in South Africa, Minnie Dlamini-Jones, who is quite curvy with the trending hourglass, curvaceous ideal.

Zama was similar to Phindile, she has tried both dieting and excising but she quit along the way. She also wanted a tiny waist, which most participants wanted.

Simi (24 years old) experienced a sense of shame when she lost weight, as people made remarks, especially when she visited home, and such comments pressured her to want to gain her weight immediately.

I have tried both dieting and exercising. I wanted to have a flat stomach but I quit along the way, it did not help me. ... I have never tried exercising or dieting, well not intentionally. At my high school everyone was kind of forced to join a certain sport so in that way a person was forced to exercise in a way, but I never liked it, I hated it, and I don't like it at all. I do not like anything that is going to make me lose weight because also I've lost weight unintentionally due to stress or depression and that pained me. I never wish to be without appetite, or be unable to eat, I thank God that I gained my weight back and now am happy with the way I look. I won't go into details as to what stressed me but I went from a size 34 to size 28, I was unable to eat maybe for a month if I am not mistaken, I would force food down my throat, my body or mind would want it so bad but I just couldn't, I would throw up immediately after I have eaten. I had sleepless nights, I could not eat or sleep, when I visited home my mom was so concerned and she suggested I go to the doctor for a checkup, because at that time I also did not know what was wrong with me, I couldn't tell her I was depressed or stressed so I did not know what was wrong with me. I also knew I was not pregnant so it had to be something else. The doctor ran all the tests,

including blood tests but did not find anything. The doctor suspected that I have stress or it might be stress, and I figured out also that it was probably stress. My mind was occupied with this thing that was bothering me, and I couldn't tell my family what it was. They concluded that it was something else that bothered me since also a tragedy had happened in my family at that time and they thought it was that thing and I left it at that. My point is I would never wish to be in the same position again, and I would hate anything that could make me lose weight. Hey, I was the talk of town, people saying "limshayile itheku" (Durban defeated her), I was a first year then, I looked so sick, everyone was just concerned about my weight. It took me a while to be able to eat again like 3, 4 meals a day like a normal person. And to gain my weight back took forever, it took a while basically. Even those B.co pills were not working for me, I wanted to eat, I wanted to gain weight so bad but it didn't happen at that time. Now I've gained it back, I am happy with my 32, 34 and I never ever want or wish to lose weight in any form. (Simi)

Simi's story was an emotional one and I was touched by her reason for not wanting to exercise or try diet. I also respected the fact that she did not want to talk about what was bothering her or what had caused her depression, but when she told her story I empathised with her. She is currently in her fourth year, 24 years of age and a beautiful girl indeed. One can argue that she had also experienced body shame when she lost weight, as people made remarks, especially when she visited home, and such comments pressured her to want to gain her weight immediately. Nqobile wanted a tiny waist and was motivated by Instagram to exercise:

I have tried exercising and dieting maybe for two weeks, I wanted to lose some belly fat but it wasn't happening. It was not even because of social media, maybe it motivated me but I have always wanted to lose stomach fat, ever since I can remember. [Nqobile]

"Nqobile said that she had tried exercising and dieting only for about two weeks and she wanted to achieve a tiny waist. She added that her reasons for trying these, were not based on the influences of social media; she was rather motivated by Instagram to exercise. She also highlighted that she had always wanted to achieve a tiny waist, long before social media.

Sindi admitted to trying workouts, but not diet:

Yes I have tried exercising but not dieting, (laughing) I really believe that dieting is impossible when you are at res, unless you are always monied to buy these things, but come on, who diets at res really?? Sometimes I get so lazy to cook and get myself some fries and bread or amagwinya (fat cookies). And when you are a res student, a Black one in particular, you do run out of food and you have to eat whatever presents itself and what happens to dieting then, well dieting is a no, no for me. As for exercising I do it sometimes if I am motivated, I do it

with my friends, we look at exercises from instagram and do them or just do work outs we know by head, but we mostly deal with stomach and buttocks, like make them firm, and thighs as well. We do maybe squats, lunges, sit ups, plank, just stuff like that.

Nolwazi also tried exercising with the aim of getting rid of the stomach fat following pregnancy but claimed this had nothing to do with social media: She was of the opinion that it was not possible to diet if you are in a university residence. Diets are expensive, she said only the ones who have money are able to diet at res. Sindi mentioned instagram and how she and her friends take exercises from Instagram when they want to exercise. As we talked further she said that Instagram was one thing that made them want to exercise in the first place because they see certain workouts and they try them. They are motivated by the results that are promised from doing exercises as shown on Instagram. Sindi stated that working out is something they do from time to time if they feel motivated to do it. They tend to quit and then start again repeatedly.

(We could go for a month without doing anything, and then start again the following month if we feel like it, but mostly i start with my roommate if we feel motivated by insta (instagram), and then we invite our friends to join us, and we go to an open space to try those workouts. (Laughing) maybe we push for a week and then stop, and then start again weeks later. Sometimes we discourage each other, I think it's very easy to quit when you exercise with friends, one person or two will say they are tired or busy, they can't make it, then we all stop).

This shows that as much as some of women want to lose weight it is tempting to give up because working out is not easy, and when one decides to work out and then stop, the body becomes worse. For a person to maintain a healthy lifestyle and exercise on a daily basis, one needs to be motivated and self-disciplined and one cannot rely on another person to maintain that lifestyle. It is clear that Sindi and her friends are not that serious about working out; they like the idea of a healthy lifestyle but they find it difficult to maintain.

After I gave birth I did try exercising to make my body strong and fit and get rid of the loose meat, especially on my stomach. I started exercising maybe 8 months later after I gave birth, I had stitches so I couldn't really tie my stomach hard or tie it at all so that it remain slim because our elders believe that you should tie your stomach as hard as you possibly can so that you don't get that stomach fat. My stomach was painful I couldn't do that, so I had a bit of weight in the stomach. I tried to get of it through exercising but I did not work for me. For me exercising had nothing to do with social media, I just want to fix my stomach and if it wasn't for my pregnancy I probably wouldn't have started exercising. [Nolwazi]

Fanele claimed to have gone to gym for the fun of it:

I have gone to gym just to take pictures and post. I am not a fan of either dieting or exercising because I am already slim, I can only do squats but I really don't have a passion for exercising, but it does look cool when people are posting on their gym outfits and that is the only thing I am obsessed with.

Fanele's response was surprising and unexpected. I am familiar with people dressing up, putting make-up on just for the sake of taking pictures with no occasion, but to dress up and actually go to gym just for the pictures is hard work. It made me laugh, but then again, people do anything to get the right pictures and post them, and receive lots of likes especially for Instagram. People will go to so much trouble, even if it means borrowing hair, phone, clothes etc., just to take good pictures. Andiswa shared a similar point to Sindi, regarding an expensive diet:

(Laughing) I am still doing it even today, I feel like umkhaba wami yiwo oxosha amadoda (I feel like my fat belly is what chases men away). I've tried dieting but engath ungaba nemali ngoba ukudla kwakhona kyabiza, aksikho okukanoma ubani (but it requires a person to have money because the food for dieting is expensive, it's not for anyone. Uyaz nawe if uthenga o cucumber no lettuce izinto ezsheshayo ukubola lezo, so kumele zisheshe ziphele (you also know that if you buy cucumbers, lettuce, those things easily expire, so you have to finish them as soon as possible, so I would want somebody who is gonna bless me (laughing). I want somebody because you see on instagram we see that o Boity Thulo now they doing this, so nathi (we also) want to have this, angith u Boity Thulo upostile, no Sbahle Mpisane wa poster, mangith ngiyafika estolo ngithole ukuth itiyi liwu R130, uthole ukuth kyabiza (Boity Thulo and Sbahle Mpisane post right, and when I get to the store I find that tea is R130, you find that it is expensive). So that is why I would end up doing things that are not right because I am affected by the things I see on instagram, I end up liking them and want to do them. That is why I am trying to exercise, ngizame ukshintsha indlela engibukeka ngayo (trying to change the way I look) because I want to look like people on instagram, I want to look like the celebrities and the things they show off there are expensive so I am affected by that."

Andiswa stated that she was still trying to exercise and diet. She stressed that dieting is expensive and that is why she would consider a blessing. She said that celebrities on Instagram post things that she cannot afford: diet food, protein shakes and even tea which is all too expensive for her. Andiswa said she was trying to exercise and change her body because she wants to look like people on Instagram or celebrities and get the likes that they are also getting. The number of likes seemed to mean a lot to participants. Andiswa said she was quite excited that I asked her these questions and said she was the right person for the research as

she very much affected by Instagram in every possible way. She admitted that she likes many things and maybe that is why she is affected by Instagram in this manner.

Mukelisiwe admitted that she tried excessive diet and exercising because she was tired of the way she looked and wanted to see the change immediately.

I think I have tried both excessive diet and exercising, there was a point where I was just tired and unhappy with the way I looked so I would starve myself and workout extra hard in gym, to a point where I would even feel dizzy during my work out sessions and sit down. I would try by all means to at least eat once a day if not at all. I wanted a flat stomach and some muscles, and funny enough I wanted to get rid of my buttocks because I thought they were too big and at that time they were not in style, now I am obsessed with them. I did lose some pounds though and my main focus was on the stomach, but my whole body was affected except for the buttocks. I started eating again and I gained all the weight.

Mukelisiwe would starve herself and work herself in gym to the extent that she would feel dizzy during her workout sessions. According to Allen (2018), excessive exercise, like extreme diets, attracts people who feel an extreme need for control in their lives, like weight reduction and muscle gain. Mukelisiwe also felt the immediate need to change her body as she was tired of the way she looked and she wanted to see the change immediately.

In terms of ideal bodies, one thing has remained consistent: tiny waists. It has always been a belief that a woman should have a flat stomach and women are always trying to get rid of the stomach fat. Unless participants had small waists already, they stated that they wanted to achieve a tiny waist by going to the gym. Only a few participants admitted to exercising or dieting as a result of the influence from social media. Twenty-seven of 50 participants admitted to having tried either work out or dieting for various reasons, three participants admitted to extreme dieting or crash dieting. Only one participant actually seemed to have achieved her desired body through dieting and exercising, and even she claimed to be in the process of building bigger buttocks through squats or squatting which she does daily. She claimed to be very much influenced by Instagram. Only 22 participants stated that they have never tried either dieting nor exercising, and are quite happy with the way they look.

According to Legg (2016), people who feel pressure to stay in shape are at risk of developing exercise addiction, and this may lead to extreme exercising or dieting. Perloff (2014) asked 'How can social media be harnessed to help young people, particularly those with predisposing vulnerability characteristics, to adopt healthier body images and resist pressures to engage in dysfunctional habits of disordered eating?' Research has documented that a variety of media interventions and persuasive regimen can have positive effects in reducing unhealthy appearance-based perceptions and eating disorder symptoms (for example, Levine and Harrison, 2009; Stice et al., 2006). Online interventions are playing an increasingly critical

role in health campaigns designed to reach young adults, and campaigns are more likely to change attitudes if they take into account relevant theories, understand the audience, and tailor the message to particular audience characteristics (Rice & Atkin, 2009). Social media campaigns harnessing the interactive strengths of Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and other networking sites have the potential to influence beliefs and attitudes.

4.5 Conclusion

Most participants claimed to prefer the “curvaceous ideal”, even those who initially seemed happy with their slim shapes. Many said they liked Sbahle Mpisane who is a thick fitness motivator or coach on Instagram. Most participants mentioned ways in which they have tried or are currently trying to conform to this body ideal, which included exercising and dieting. The most common forms of exercise mentioned were squats for building bigger, shapelier buttocks as well as exercises to reduce stomach fat.

CHAPTER 5

PROBING THE CONSIDERATIONS OF SURGERY TO CHANGE BODY SHAPE AND COPY THE CURVY IDEAL SHAPE

5.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to find out if participants would go to the extreme of surgery to change some parts of their bodies, to conform to the trending curvaceous ideal, since surgery is becoming common and even normalised.

5.2 Cosmetic surgery

Cosmetic surgery is a surgical expertise that aims at correcting or improving body imperfections. It includes surgical procedures requested by patients to improve their appearance. In the last few years we have witnessed the use of medical treatment and cosmetic surgery more and more frequently in line with the continuous evolution of modern society, where individuals' well-being also depends on the attractiveness of their physical appearance, according to the various standards imposed by society. Berer (2010) claimed that cosmetic surgery is not a new phenomenon. Facelifts, nose jobs, breast reduction and breast implants have been common among women for decades and the practice of cosmetic surgery is well established in many countries, including developing countries. However, in the past 10-15 years, there has been a seismic shift in what is considered possible and desirable to change with regard to the bodies we are born with. What has been labeled a "body-changing culture" is being popularised and becoming pervasive in many societies, and now includes changes to almost all parts of the body, especially the most intimate ones, through a growing list of surgical procedures. Naomi Wolf (1990) argued in *The Beauty Myth* that the most frequent cosmetic procedures are currently being performed on the areas of bodies most associated with "femaleness": thighs, stomach, buttocks, and breasts. But this has gone further to include vulvas and vaginas, and for men, penises.

5.3 Participants' views on cosmetic surgery

Most participants stated that they would not consider surgery, implying that social media or Instagram does not affect them to that extent. However 10% admitted that they would definitely consider it, some of whom were willing to go that far to change their bodies.

Expense of cosmetic surgery can be prohibitive. Snotty said that if were given an opportunity for free she would definitely do it:

If given an opportunity to do it for free, definitely I would, because they say it's a lot of money. I would do a boob job, I need me some meaty, fresh titties, amile (pointy) and show them off (laughing).

Ayanda would also definitely consider it:

In fact it is in my bucket list, it is one of the things I want once I am all monied (have money). I would only do the breasts, the butt no, ngisharp (I am ok with the buttocks). I always tell my partner that I am interested in doing this thing, and he be like, no babe you good, I don't know if it's because he thinks I am going to use his money (laughing). Although he'll benefit too but I would just be doing this for me, for my own comfort.

Her only concern is whether she would be brave enough to do it:

My butt, it doesn't want to be the way I want it to be, but I don't know if I would be brave enough to actually go through with it if I was given a chance.

Phindile had nothing against surgery but it is not something she would consider doing for now; she might consider it in the future.

Other reactions were varied:

Mbewo: Not really, I wouldn't consider surgery to change some parts of my body but I would like to gain a little on the right parts of my body like hips and butt.

Snenhlahla: No, I do not need to change how I look just because of people on social media, there is absolutely no way I should want to do that because not everyone has pear-shaped bodies on Instagram, not even celebrities. And the same social media that lowers self-esteem is the same social media that has pages/platforms which portray positive messages to encourage people who have lower opinions about their bodies to appreciate themselves.

Snenhlahla made the important point that social media can play a dual role: the same social media that lowers people's self-esteem by promoting perfect bodies portrays positive messages to people who have low self-esteem and encourages people to love and accept their bodies the way they are.

Thaka, Thaleh and Mini said they would never consider surgery to enhance themselves:

Thaka: No I wouldn't consider surgery.

Thaleh: No, I'd never consider surgery.

Mini: No, I will never, even if it means to die, I'd rather die.

Andisiwe and Thandiwe would also not consider surgery, the latter largely due to fear of what could go wrong:

I do want big ass and boobs but I do not think I would go as far as surgery, I'll stick to other alternatives like doing squats for big butt.

Thandiwe: No I would not consider surgery, I am scared and seeing some shows on TV of women who have performed surgery especially a boob job and regretting it makes me not to even consider it. Sometimes things do go wrong and people experience lifetime medical problems. Some people would say they made their boobs too big and experience back pain, and they would want to decrease them or remove them, and some just keep going back to fix them, I cannot. And those women because its reality TV shows, it really looks like they experience so much pain, I don't like pain. And what if I do this surgery, boob job and I age? (Laughing), my boobs would just remain there looking all fine, no I cannot.

Thandiwe stated that she would not consider surgery simply because she was scared. She stated that she is likely to watch some shows on television of women who have performed cosmetic surgery and regretted it or something went wrong. She stated that people experience lifetime medical problems: sometimes breasts are unequal, the one too big or too small, some would have back pain and some would say their breasts are too heavy and want to re-do them or remove them, basically a person just has to keep visiting the doctor and do random checkups. Thandiwe added that they always look like they are in so much pain after they perform the surgery and she never wants to go through that pain (this was evident from the expression on her face). Thandiwe lastly claimed that when you age, while the whole body shrinks, the breasts remain the same, looking like breasts of a teenager. So for her, people do not think of the long term effects.

Noxolo felt she would be disrespecting God by surgically changing her body:

No I would not consider surgery, I think by so doing I would be disrespecting God and saying he made a mistake on me for creating me the way I am and me changing his creation. I am fine with the way I look, everything in my body is where it is supposed to be, and there are people who like me just the way I am.

Noxolo seemed to be a strong believer in God and His creation, she stated that she would not consider surgery for the reason that she would be disrespecting God if she was to do this. She believed that there was no mistake when she was created, everything is where it is supposed to be and she is happy with the way she looks. Precious, on the other hand, would consider surgery:

not to please anyone but to finally feel the femininity of curves, something that I've never had.

Thobile respected other people's choices but felt that cosmetic surgery does not look natural:

I respect those who choose to undergo it but at the moment, it's not something I choose to do for myself. Technologically speaking, I believe we are years away from having most cosmetic surgeries look truly natural. Also, because cosmetic surgery is still a relatively new endeavour especially in Africa or South Africa,

it's not very common, we aren't aware of the long term effects. I support those who are genuinely uncomfortable with certain features of theirs and who truly believe their quality of life will improve when they feel good about their looks, but I'm not so unhappy with my natural features that I would go under the knife or scissors to change them.

Similarly, Nobuhle noted:

And some people from TV, mostly American who have put implants and buttocks do look good so good for them, and there are some that don't look so good either, where you can tell that, that person has done a boob job [laughing].

Thobile started by saying she respects those who choose to undergo surgery but it is not something she would do for herself. According to her, surgery doesn't look completely natural. She also stated that surgery is not very common in African countries, or in South Africa, and therefore we are not aware of long term effects, which is true. Thobile was very vocal and added that she supports those who are uncomfortable with their bodies and choose to perform surgery in hopes to improve their quality of lives when they feel good about themselves, but she is OK with her body; she is not dissatisfied to the extent that she would have her body cut. Sihawu only supported surgery under certain circumstances:

Plastic surgery can be a necessity for people who've lost a lot of weight, not just for lame reasons, the excess skin can be a burden on daily activities and lead to infections. I fully support it under these circumstances. Those who just add buttocks and breasts and whatever, just for the sake of it, they just have too much money that they do not know what to do with it.

Both Thembekka and Nobuhle stated that surgery was not something they would seriously consider: *"I don't hate any part of myself enough to have someone cut it off and reshape it. I don't think badly of anyone who does choose to have it done, but it's a no for me."*

Nobuhle: *I don't think I would ever consider surgery if I am not injured or anything like that. Firstly that thing is for people with money and a lot of it, and they have to consult every now and then for checkups, if everything is still going well and there are no problems, I don't like hospitals or doctors and pain for that matter, so I would never go for it if I am not injured. Also at the moment there is no part of my body that I am dissatisfied with to that extent of surgery. ... and believe me I don't trust doctors al ala emzansi, if I were to put myself in such surgeries nje ngingafuna ukuya overseas (I would want to go overseas, no offence to our doctors but nje interms of these surgeries I would have to travel.*

According to Del Vecchio and Zienowics (2017), buttock augmentation has been named the fastest growing cosmetic surgery in America. Indeed, many women are choosing butt implants as the means to achieve a better butt. If squats and lunges are not delivering the

sculpted booty of one's dreams, plastic surgery is seen as the key to unlocking a beautifully sculpted backside for most women. Today's top plastic surgeons are warning patients that implants may not be the right choice for everyone when it comes to butt augmentations, due to the risks that accompany them.

5.4 Complications and risks linked to surgery

The complication rate after placement of butt implants is much higher than after placement of breast implants. "About one out of three has to be removed for either infection, pain, or malrotation/malposition," according to Dr Del Vecchio, a certified plastic surgeon and expert in the field of buttock augmentation.

According to Del Vecchio and Zienowics (2017), possible butt implant complications include:

- Infection
- Malposition of the implant
- Pain after surgery
- Capsular contracture.

5.4.1 The risk of infection leading to butt implant removal

Every surgery carries the risk of infection. When infection occurs after a surgery that involved the placement of an implant, a second surgery is then required to remove the implants for the body to heal.

5.4.2 The risk of butt implant malposition

Even if an implant is placed perfectly at the time of surgery, the position may change over time. One patient's implants did not remain in place, but instead rotated when touched.

5.4.3 The risk of experiencing intense pain after butt implants

Butt implants are typically placed within or beneath the muscle. During surgery the muscles are stretched and pulled, and this can lead to significant pain after surgery. Any position or movement that involves the butt muscles can add to the discomfort.

5.4.4 The risk of capsular contracture, leading to butt implant removal

When a foreign object is placed inside the body, the body forms a thin layer of scar tissue around the object. This happens with every foreign object surgically placed – knee replacements, hip replacements, breast implants and butt implants. Sometimes, instead of staying soft and thin, that layer of scar tissue changes over time. If the tissue begins to tighten around the implant, it can make a soft implant feel hard. This is called capsular contracture, and is a complication that plagues many breast implant procedures. "If you get a firm contracture," explained Dr. Zienowicz, "you can't even sit comfortably, not to mention lie on it, or have anybody touch it, because it's hard and painful."

It is evident that surgery cannot be taken lightly, and the fact that 10 percent of participants would consider surgery to change their looks is problematic. However, it is also good that most of the participants are not affected by the trend of a curvaceous body to this extent.

Cosmetic surgery is not as common in South Africa as it is in America but Africans are very much influenced by Americans or American trends. Cosmetic surgery is a very big trend in America and therefore it might be adopted in the near future, however current results from Howard college female students indicate that this is not yet the case. Some and most African (especially Zulu) women are naturally gifted when it comes to hips and buttocks, and it is good that now they finally get a chance to embrace that and be proud of their bodies, without feeling they should try to be thin. According to Grant (2014) “there hasn’t been a big demand for buttocks augmentation in South Africa.” According to Dr Snijman cited in Grant (2014), the most popular cosmetic surgeries in South Africa are breast augmentation, blepharoplasty – or eyelid surgery which tightens drooping upper eyelid skin and reduces bags under the eyes, liposuction, breast lift, fat transfers, abdominoplasty and body contouring – also known as a tummy tuck. The most popular non-surgical procedures are botox, fillers, chemical peels, microdermabrasion and micro needling.

According to the US doctors, buttocks surgery is performed every 30 minutes in the United States.

Below is a picture of a doctor enhancing a patient’s (Tiffany) butt with facial filler on national television.



*Tiffany's buttocks **before** and **after** filler:*



According to the Mail & Guardian (2014) botox and boob jobs are the most popular cosmetic procedures performed worldwide, but by far the fastest growing surgery is buttock augmentation, or glutocoplasty – a procedure performed to create the kind of shapely bottoms for which celebrities like Nicki Minaj are famed. Trends in South Africa are very much influenced by the US, and the trend of curvaceous bodies has been promoted by black American women and celebrities like Kim Kardashian and Nicki Minaj. Instagram is an easy platform for Africans to follow American trends: it connects us together and we are able to follow people we like all across the world, there are no limitations and there are no restrictions. Kim Kardashian has page on Instagram for her buttocks alone, which has thousands of followers and thousands of likes. Many women work at developing a socially perfect body based on beauty, grace, and femininity (Cronan & Scott, 2006). Crafting a perfect body takes work – a lot of work. It is a constant challenge. The images displayed on social media on a daily basis of perfect body types lead people to believe they need to capture all the elements mentioned, even if it means undergoing surgery.

5.5 Conclusion

The majority of participants mentioned that they are not pressured to the extent that they would consider surgery. However, 10% admitted they would definitely consider it. Surgery is extreme given that it is not guaranteed to be a success; there are always dangers and side effects.

CHAPTER 6

THE BIGGEST CAUSE OF BODY IMAGE CONCERNS FOR YOUNG BLACK WOMEN

6.1 Introduction

According to Ting et al. (2015), close friends/peers at schools, universities or workplaces are driving factors behind why people start using Instagram. Most Black people, especially from disadvantaged backgrounds like myself, started using Instagram at university, with the availability of free Wi-Fi and free access to computers all the time. I was introduced to Instagram by a close friend at university. As a photo-sharing application, Instagram enables users to stay connected with each other even when they are apart. Users are also affected by their friends in general in the use of Instagram. They can easily see the growing popularity of the application. As studies suggest that people tend to post, and sometimes enhance, attractive images of themselves on their social media profiles (Manago et al., 2008), viewing these “idealised” images could contribute to body image concerns. Meier and Gray (2014) found that engaging in photo activities such as posting and sharing photos of oneself and friends, was significantly correlated with body image dissatisfaction. The number of followers/friends on social media was significantly correlated with a greater drive towards appearance comparison. This suggests that users with more followers or friends are likely to engage in the process of comparing their appearance to others’ and that this could lead to greater body image concerns. Connecting with larger numbers of friends on social networking sites and potentially being exposed to their idealised images may increase the likelihood of “ready and multiple social comparisons” (Tiggemann & Slater, 2013, p. 632). Appearance comparison in social media/body image relationship suggests that social media tends to influence body image concerns via appearance comparison. According to Brown (2017), some women are easily influenced and pressured by social media and many other social influences to achieve the perfect body.

6.2 Social media and body image concern

According to Phindile, social media is the biggest cause of body image concerns:

*It doesn't just tell us what to look like, it shows us who we should look like.
Constantly reminds you that you're not curvy or thick enough hence you have
less followers, less likes, making you less relevant.*

The Instagram “like” button is a feature that allows users to show their support for specific pictures and videos. The “like” button allows users to show their appreciation for content without having to make a written comment. The number of likes and followers has been stressed by quite a number of participants; it does seem that those with less likes and followers, are affected and feel less of themselves while those with more likes and followers gain confidence and self-esteem. Not only does social media extend peer involvement beyond

the classroom, but features in social media such as the “liking” option encourage social comparison behaviour. Kalnes’ (2013) study also found that many young females were attentive to the number of likes their pictures received in comparison to the number of likes of friends’ pictures. In the study, it was noted that many of the females compared themselves to their peers, not necessarily models, increasing feelings of jealousy and decreasing their self-esteem. Participants mentioned that feelings of competitiveness arose when choosing which pictures to post and how many shares and likes their photos received (Kalnes, 2013).

Lindi agreed with Phindile that it is indeed social media that is the biggest cause of body image concerns:

The reason why I say it social media is because it is where people like me are being bullied. On social media you find that curvaceous or thick bodied people are being praised. Social media has a tendency of portraying thick, tiny waist, curvaceous people as the ‘wife material’ type. And us skinny people as people who men won’t settle for.

This concurs with a recent post I saw on Facebook: “ake ngibingelele bonke labosisi abagqoka kusukela ku size 34 kuya phezulu , ngithi nje niyaphilisa”(Qwabe, 2018). (let me greet all the ladies that wear size 34 upwards, I say, you make us live)” – in other words those curvy women make men happy.

Nash also felt that social media contributes to developing issues of self-esteem, making the point that our parents and grandparents were probably less likely to have had these negative feelings about themselves because there was no exposure to social media.

We view images of people who have the said to be perfect bodies and then have low self-esteem when we look at ourselves and do not find those traits. I used to compare myself with women on Instagram but now I have grown enough to understand that everyone is unique and it is not only the body that makes one looks beautiful. I know that I matter, I am important and my existence means everything to a lot of people so I should not feel less just because I do not meet the society’s definition of beauty. I don’t need make-up, designer clothes and outfits that reveal my body in order to be considered beautiful. The things that gets life far is a great personality and mindset. Most young girls end up giving their pride and compromise their principles and values just to look like celebrities and slay queens on Instagram. If it had not be for Instagram or social media, I am certain that I wouldn’t have passed or experienced that stage of having negative perceptions about my body because really if you look back in the old days, our parents and grandparents never had these feelings about themselves because there was no such exposure to social media.

Thaka and Thaleh felt that peers of the same gender are the biggest cause of body image concerns.

Thaka: *I think the biggest cause is peers of same gender, I think we always compete with each other, we always have beef even if singazani (we don't know each other). Everyone wants to be better than the other.*

Thaleh: *Peers of same gender... I guess ingoba omunye uzama ukuba ncono kunomunye (because one is trying to be better than the other), so that ngzohlezi ngiyipreference yabona (so that I'll always be the preference, you see), especially when it comes to men. Men are few in this world so we want to be the chosen one (laughing), so I guess also the other cause for these things is men because they make us to want to look beautiful, and we want them to compliment us.*

Mini felt that it is social media as well as peers of same gender that are the biggest cause of body image concerns:

Social media celebrities are affecting us because they have fine bodies, and peers of same gender because we tend to undermine each other because of our weight and how we look.

Nomzamo felt peers of same gender on social media have a big effect:

I would say peers of same gender, on social media. Women are so competitive in terms of looks, in terms of everything, women have this thing that whatever you do I can do better, and they are forever increasing the standard. Women want to be walking dolls, to be perfect and people respond well to everything women do to make themselves pretty. On social media we judge that by the number of likes and comments, everybody saying 'oh wow, beautiful' and everything good. So we all want that, we all want to meet the standard of the slayers.

6.3 A male perspective

I am also including a post on Facebook from a male perspective. According to Tshabalala (2018), women frame men for their insecurities:

"This is my biggest beef with women. It drives me up the wall when they frame us for their insecurities and guilt trip men for things we don't care about or notice. Yes we aren't perfect and are trash at times but can women take responsibility and stop blaming us for everything. It's usually the crowd that has learnt English words like misogynist, feminism and all these other fancy words that will always try to make men feel bad. You will call me trash after this but let me dispel some of the myths that women have about men and what we want from them:

1. *Do men care about stretch marks?*

Noooo!!! Asinadaba, (no, we don't care) personally I've never had a friend who complained that they met a pretty lady but were turned off by their stretch marks. It's those bio oil ads (adverts) that give you sleepless nights about your marks not men.

2. Do men care about a women who wears cheap leggings?

Let me tell you something. We don't care if your leggings cost R10 or they were donated to you by the leggings foundation of zodwa wabantu, those things are life givers to your eyes!! We bow down to leggings it's your 'besties' and freinemies (friends who pretend they like you) who make you feel bad for buying them at small street instead of Edgars ... thina sisi, asinandaba (us men sister, we do not care)

3. Men like women with expensive weaves

**sigh* most men can't tell the difference between a Brazilian, Peruvian and a Soweto weave. It's you, yes you women who put pressure on yourselves and each other to wear expensive weaves with the right texture to impress your chommies (friends). Stop saying men like women with expensive weaves. If that was the case, weavers would be getting married but the reality is that mostly average, beautiful naturals and mubizas (ugly) are getting married.*

4. Do men care about expensive make-up?

We can't tell if you used Mac or China City make-up. We are just happy if you look good. Our focus is not on fleeking brows (eyebrows), normal ones will do, but you choose to graphic design and architect your brow so you can fit with the other ladies and get picture perfect selfies. Blame it on the instagram slay queens who give you the pressure, leave us out of this please."

The reason for including this post is to propose that it is women who put pressure on one another or each other to be beautiful. Women have been socialised to believe that appearance is an important basis for self-evaluation and for evaluation by others (Thompson, Heinberg, Altabe & Tantleff-Dunn, 1999). I have personal evidence to the contrary, however, and have overhead comments that men make about stretch marks and women's sagging breasts. Men say things like "women should set alarm for their breasts – maybe they will wake up". A male relative of mine once made fun of a woman's sagging breasts and I could not help but feel ashamed of the comments he was making and it was disturbing to hear. These things can make women consider breast surgery and so on, because they want to be beautiful and perfect and not be made fun of.

6.4 Participant perspectives on the effect of social media

According to Slindile (29 years old), young female students can be so caught up with trying to impress peers of the same gender and being glamorous, to the detriment of their studies.

"I feel like there is too much pressure on how we should look like between the peers. We compete with each other on looking good and it unfortunate that in

the process I feel like we forget who we really are and where we come from. I personally think that this competition does a lot of damage to girls who do not have these features. They lose confidence because they are labelled by their peers and called names. They literally end up isolating themselves which causes them more stress and which may lead to them losing focus on their studies and also vice versa, sometimes you get caught up and focus too much on your looks and end up forgetting your studies.” She gave the example of an ‘in’ crowd of girls at her university who got so “focused on slaying and hanging out with people and forgot to study and not all of them made it to third year. My point is some people forget who they are, where they come from and what they are here for, and focus on other things.”

Sindi felt that that social media has replaced traditional media (television and magazines):

I feel like women are competing to be the best if not competing for the likes, because this thing of likes on social media makes people feel as if they are the ish. People also celebrate the fact that they have many followers and women do their best to achieve that, and most women achieve that if of cause they are beautiful according to society and most of the times women take or post pictures with less clothes on so that they are able to show off their assets that are mostly desired by society of which is a tiny waist, big breasts, big buttocks and hips so that they get more likes and followers.” Sindi admitted to feeling personally influenced by instagram: “I always see hot, hot, hot women and I do wish I had what they have you know, I always feel less everything after seeing those women, but then I pick a few things that I like when I see and apply them myself. For instance if I see a woman wearing a beautiful lipstick with a similar skin tone, I also try and get that color, or clothing or earrings etc., how they put an outfit together, I always pick those things.

In a study done by Clark and Tiggemann (2008), it was found that the desire to please and the importance of being liked by others had an impact on appearance satisfaction levels in girls (Clark & Tiggemann, 2008). In other words, the more girls are focused on how they look, the more they will be preoccupied with their body image and have increased levels of body dissatisfaction. Grabe et al. (2008) found that many girls measure self-worth by their appearance. “Many [young women] become preoccupied with the quest for physical perfection as an avenue to attention and approval from others” (Rudd et al., 2000, p. 154). Similarly, Richins (1991) reported that comparisons lead to increased levels of attractiveness standards and decreased body satisfaction levels. Although often comparisons are made without intent, they can negatively impact on adolescents and young adults, as they begin to self-evaluate (Rudd & Lennon, 2000). Social comparison behaviour leads to “guilt, shame, stress, unhappiness, insecurity, and body dissatisfaction”. In reality, body image issues and the drive to obtain a perfect body has historically been an issue; however, today’s adolescent

girls seem to face these issues at an intensified level and with more emphasis on the body specifically (Rudd et al., 2000).

Sbo felt that all platforms, namely social media, mass media, peers of same gender and peers of opposite gender, contribute to her body image concerns:

I feel like everything that you mentioned on those options, everything is the cause of my image concerns, I just want to change my body because of what I see on social media, everybody on Twitter is wow, Instagram they are gorgeous, everybody on Facebook is looking so hot, even my friends on campus nje, uthole ukuth ufike nomuntu (you find that you come with a person) and the next thing they are slaying, I just want to slay like everyone else, the problem is that I don't have money, so on that regard I say its peer pressure cause I see things from them. Also, I can also say its peers of opposite gender because I want them to notice me and like me and ask me out and also give me money (laughing out loud) bengidizele oe (they must bless me girl), njengoba benza nabakwanye o gal abahle, ngthole okusa weave nje ngi slaye name (like they do to other beautiful girls, and get myself some weave and slay also) like other kids.

Sbo wanted to change her body because of what she sees on social media. Everybody on Twitter is wow, amazing, on Instagram people are gorgeous as well as on Facebook, everyone is looking hot. Sbo went on to say even people that he hung around with since starting university were now slaying. According to Wallis (2015), social media lends itself to not only models and celebrities but to many opportunities for users to compare themselves with their peers. Since social media is largely focused on obtaining 'friends' many are already classmates and 'real-life' friends that users may associate with on a regular basis. Social media gives female adolescents and young adults more opportunities and ease of access to comparisons with peers, which often affects body satisfaction. Sbo felt everyone was slaying and she wanted to slay like everyone else but her problem was that she did not have money. Peer pressure from same gender seemed to have an effect because she saw her friends slaying. Sbo also said peers of the opposite gender are the ones that she wants to look good for, she wants them to notice her and ask her out. She would also like a blesser so that she could afford weaves so that she could slay like other girls. This is not to say that all the women that have weaves or who are "slaying" have blessers or have men that give them money; some have their own money and some come from rich families and can afford weaves and make-up etc. According to Brown (2017), as women hit puberty, they realize their bodies are meant for more than getting them around. Women begin to learn that in order to capture the attention of a desirable partner we feel the need to be attractive (Cash & Smolak, 2012, p. 20). Women learn that worth, success, and likeability is judged and determined by physical appearance (Bordo, 1993). Women start wearing make-up, shaving their legs, buying clothing and accessories to attract a partner. "Women learn that their bodies are an article of trade and that if they can look good this will influence their life experiences" (Fredrickson & Roberts,

1997, p. 177). As women grow into adults, they realise their bodies become objects. They are judged daily on their appearance, and they do all it takes to not be judged negatively, to remain liked and desired.

Social media may be having similar or greater effects on people to the effects of television in the past. Social media has the ability to quickly reach viewers in a way that traditional media is not necessarily able to. For example, it takes mere seconds to upload a photo on a social media site and share that photo with numerous others. Many websites or social media platforms feature advertisements, celebrity gossip, pop culture news, photos and videos of celebrities, models, and perfect looking people. These images could be sending the wrong messages to online users and viewers; in order to be perfect, you must look like them. Haferkamp and Kramer (2011) found that “people who look at attractive users on [social media] have less positive emotions afterwards and are also more dissatisfied with their own body image than people who look at unattractive users” (p. 313). Attractiveness standards are raised, and body satisfaction is lowered. According to Martin, Martin and Kennedy (1993), self-perceptions of attractiveness and self-esteem were all lowered after the girls in their study viewed attractive female images, supporting previous research that highly attractive media images negatively impact body satisfaction in young girls. By participating in social comparison behaviors to models in advertisements, again, it was noted that attractiveness standards were raised therefore causing a decrease in participants’ own body satisfaction (Rudd & Lennon, 2000). Women on Instagram are usually exposed to upward comparison. Upward comparison is when an individual compares themselves with someone who is “more than”, for example, more attractive, more intelligent, more humorous, etc. On Instagram women get to compare themselves to celebrities and successful people, who seem way ahead in life. Upward comparisons often make people feel levels of decreased confidence, self-esteem, and negative feelings, as they feel they do not measure up. Downward comparison behaviour is when an individual compares themselves with someone who is “less than”, for example, less attractive, less intelligent, less humorous, etc. Downward comparison usually results in feelings of increased confidence, self-esteem, and positive feelings. While comparisons can create negative and positive feelings in all individuals, social comparison tends to affect adolescents and young adults the most as this is an essential time for self-evaluations (Levinson, 1986). Social media plays a major role in body dissatisfaction among female adolescents and often fuels social comparison behavior, encouraging young females to compare themselves against images seen in social media, which can lead to low self-esteem and body dissatisfaction (Kalnes, 2013).

Many young women struggle to achieve the goal of looking like the perfect celebrities and models featured on the social media platforms. Women may feel pressured to look as curvy as Instagram slay queens and celebrities, using any means. Women strive for ideal bodies through restricted diets, cosmetic surgeries, excessive exercising and starvation. People tend to focus on attributes they feel they lack when compared with a larger group of people, and therefore become motivated to improve themselves in those areas (Festinger, 1954).

Therefore, based on the premises of social comparison theory, people who emphasise a particular attribute, for example weight, will then feel more pressure to obtain certain weight standards in order to fit in or belong with a certain group (Festinger, 1954). Additionally, people tend to compare themselves with other people most closely related to them (Festinger, 1954).

Kozar and Damhorst (2008) examined older women's social comparison behaviour with regard to fashion models in advertisements. Female adolescents and young adults with a predisposition to social comparison behavior use peers and media images to evaluate themselves against, and increase their risk of negative consequences due to this very delicate stage in their lives. Adolescence and young adulthood play important roles in the formation of the individual self, and are critical to a person's development. Adolescent females in this stage have a heightened increase in awareness of culture and are more susceptible to social standards of beauty as compared to those who are older (Baltes et al., 1999). As females move through adolescence and young adulthood, they develop an intensified awareness and sensitivity towards outside influences such as friends and the media in order to gain understanding and knowledge on many different aspects of life. Arguably, some of these aspects are beauty, physical appearance and body type.

According to Wallis (2015), there has been a positive response to the portrayal of women in the media by the implementation of real beauty campaigns. Real beauty campaigns shared via YouTube and social media sites get millions of views and thousands of positive comments (YouTube, 2015). These real beauty campaigns focus on highlighting women who are "real" or natural, with what normally would be considered as "flaws" by the highly critical fashion and beauty industries. Real beauty campaigns highlight and celebrate a woman's unique and natural body, be it short, curvy, tall or petite. This contrasts with most forms of current social media to date; real beauty or natural almost do not exist on social media platforms with all the enhancements and filters that are available. At first, Instagram appeared to be a platform where diversity of body shapes, sizes and skin colour was embraced and promoted. But women who do not have ideal bodies are being bullied on social media, so people have not really accepted or appreciated this diversity. Women are constantly made fun of regarding their physical imperfections.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the majority of the participants felt that peers of the same gender put the most pressure on women to look a certain way or to have body image concerns, either through social media or in person. The study revealed that women put pressure on each other because they are competing with each other.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

This concluding chapter provides an overview of the study, discusses the findings, strengths and limitations of the study and considers the implications of findings.

This study aimed to probe the role of Instagram in perpetuating the curvaceous body ideal. The focus of the study was based on Black young women students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, ranging between the ages of 18-30 years.

7.2 Overview of literature review

When reviewing literature concerned with social media, it was found that increased exposure to social networking sites such as Facebook, as part of overall Internet exposure (Tiggermann & Miller, 2010; Tiggermann & Slatter, 2013), was related to heightened levels of body image concerns, compared to other types of Internet sites. Existing related research has also demonstrated a positive correlation between Facebook usage and bodily dissatisfaction (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2015). Research shows that women regularly evaluate their appearance by comparing themselves to others (Leahey, Crowther & Mickelson, 2007) and that a greater tendency to engage in appearance comparisons is associated with a high level of body dissatisfaction (Keery et al., 2004). Social media has provided an easily accessible platform for women to compare themselves by sharing photos of themselves. Meyer and Cukier (2013) added that, given that 10 million new photographs are uploaded to Facebook every hour, Facebook provides women with a medium for frequently engaging in appearance related social comparisons and can therefore potentially contribute to body image concerns among young women. Social media use differs from consumption of more traditional media formats in the sense that the process is more interactive, allowing users to actively search for the content and engage in certain activities (Kim & Chock, 2015). As a result, these types of social engagement behaviours may increase opportunities for users to view the enhanced images that social media friends post on their profiles, leading to a greater tendency to compare their appearance to others (Kim & Chock, 2015). With Instagram, the pressure multiplies when compared to Facebook, mostly because Instagram is dominated by celebrities and models. Comparing oneself to a celebrity may be more upsetting than comparing oneself to an ordinary friend, because celebrities 'enhanced beauty and bodies are perfected by professionals in the beauty industry.

According to Patton (2006) the marginalisation of certain types of beauty that deviate from the "norm" is devastating to all women. Tshegofa (2014, p.1) suggested that the body is a contested site of struggle and that this is especially true for women who do not fit into the conventional beauty ideal. All women want to feel special, to look beautiful and be

considered beautiful, therefore if one's body is not categorised as beautiful or regarded as the norm, this is problematic. Research has suggested that the ideals that women perceive to be attractive can be heavily influenced by men's preferences of an ideal female body (Molloy & Herzberger, 1998). Studies have found that Black men consider a larger body size more attractive than a smaller body size (Thompson et al., 1996) and that Black men prefer women with a curvaceous lower body shape (i.e. wide hips and round buttocks) (Jackson & McGill, 1996). Also, a recent study on Internet daters' body type preferences found that Black men had stronger preferences for larger and voluptuous body types of potential female daters than slim or slender feminine body types, which were preferred by White men (Glasser et al., 2009). White women therefore tend to prefer thin body types. Grabe (2006) has also looked at ethnicity and body dissatisfaction among women in the United States. Grabe's study revealed that White women have greater body dissatisfaction than woman of colour, and as predicted, it was revealed that most girls desired to be lighter rather than heavier (Grabe, 2006).

7.3 Challenges

7.3.1 Limited literature

There were few studies on Instagram especially concerning women's bodies, which was challenging, and I had to borrow from other social media platforms. Also many previous studies focus on slim women as being idealised. The curvaceous trend is only recent. I therefore needed to use blogs and newsfeed on the Internet about recent trends, as well as television shows.

7.3.2 Methodological challenges

Doing a qualitative ethnographic study had its challenges. Interviews and focus groups are time consuming to organise and provide a large amount of data. I was too ambitious choosing 50 participants to interview. It was difficult for me to source such a high number of participants and for them to make time for the interviews. Some were unwilling even to hear about the study, others were not interested, some agreed to be interviewed on the spot, while others agreed to be interviewed but then forgot about the scheduled interview or kept postponing. This caused numerous delays.

It was even more challenging with the focus group to encourage participation and focus. The group had 10 members and was difficult to manage with my limited experience. Despite the challenges, this qualitative research was a good learning experience – it improved my communication skills and I have gained confidence as a researcher.

7.4 Critical overview of findings

This study made use of Black feminism theory as well as social constructionism theory in probing or investigating how beauty or body ideals are socially constructed, as well as how Black women are usually excluded in beauty standards in terms of race, gender and class. According to Black feminism and relevant to this study, Black women do not only experience pressures to conform to and maintain beauty standards, they need to make extra effort because their skin, hair and bodies often do not fit into society's dominant beauty standards. However, according to this study, in terms of bodies, Black women with curves are the dominant beauty standard or body ideal that other Black women and women of other races aspire to. Social constructionism argues that society has constructed a perception of women's bodies as objects to be desired, gazed upon and constantly recreated so that they do not lose value or attractiveness (Dworking, 1974; Mulvey, 1975). Messages are conveyed by society through media and social media of what women's bodies should look like. The internalisation of the media body ideal is an adoption of a socially defined body ideal as a personal standard (Knauss & Paxton, 2008). Additionally class, culture and race have an influence on the way in which women perceive and are perceived with regard to societal beauty ideals and how women identify themselves according to or within these ideals (Shabangu, 2016).

Four themes made up the ethnographic chapters of this study and have been discussed extensively. These themes and findings are briefly critiqued below.

7.4.1 Curvaceous bodies are trending on Instagram and this has an effect on young Black women

One chapter has probed the extent to which the curvaceous idolised body on Instagram causes body dissatisfaction in young Black women. The narratives/results of this study revealed that participants were well aware of the curvaceous trend of women's bodies on Instagram. Some participants were not affected by the trend but most participants seem to be affected. Results showed that some of the participants had a sense of pride in who they were and their uniqueness and didn't feel the pressure to conform to the bodies seen on Instagram. Some participants were aware that filters can change photos to show unrealistic bodies to which they did not feel they needed to conform. However, the majority of participants felt huge pressure to conform to the curvaceous body standards or ideal on Instagram, especially regarding their buttocks and waist. Such pressures from social media may be taken very lightly but they do affect women to some extent and at times may result in mental disturbance because their minds may be occupied by the desire to achieve these ideal bodies.

7.4.2 Women's preferences regarding body types, shapes or sizes

A second chapter identified the preferences of young Black women's body types, shapes or sizes. It considered what influences these preferences and lastly, explored whether extreme exercises and diets were considered means to achieve these bodies.

Most participants claimed to prefer the “curvaceous ideal”, even those who initially seemed happy with their slim shapes. Many said they liked Sbahlé Mpisane who is a thick fitness motivator or coach on Instagram. Most participants mentioned ways in which they have tried or are currently trying to conform to this body ideal, which included exercising and dieting. The most common form of exercise mentioned was squats for building bigger, shapelier buttocks. Also exercises of burning stomach fat were mentioned by most participants.

7.4.3 Probing the considerations of surgery to change body shape and copy the ideal curvy shape

A third chapter aimed to find out if participants would go to the extreme of surgery to change some parts of their bodies, to conform to the trending curvaceous ideal, since surgery has become/ is becoming so common or ‘normalised’.

The majority of participants mentioned that they are not pressured to the extent that they could consider surgery. However, 10% admitted they would definitely consider it. Surgery is extreme given that it is not guaranteed to be a success; there are always dangers and side effects.

7.4.4 Causes of body image concerns for young Black women

A final chapter aimed to establish the main reasons for women’s body image concerns between the categories: own perception of one’s body, peers of same gender, peers of opposite gender, ideals on social media, ideals on mass media, men’s preferences or other. The study revealed that the majority of the participants felt that peers of the same gender put the most pressure on women to look a certain way or to have body image concerns, either through social media or in person. The study revealed that women put pressure on each other because they are competing with each other.

Also, the issue of ‘likes’ and followers were mentioned repeatedly. Participants mentioned it was upsetting and discouraging if one failed to get many likes; this makes participants lose self-esteem. Sindi pointed out that people get likes and followers if they are beautiful according to society. Social constructivism was utilised to explain how everyday perceptions of female beauty are socially and historically embedded. The concept of beauty in modern society is ever changing and associated with Western ideals. Appearance seems central to a female’s self-definition. Simone de Beauvoir affirmed that “beauty is not an idea one contemplates but a reality that reveals itself (citing Festa, 2017). Only through women does beauty exist in the world” (1997, 165-166). Femininity can thus be regarded as being socially constructed and women are defined by the standards society places upon them – such as beauty and femininity.

According to Perloff (2014), “social media and contemporary digital technologies are the playing field of today’s youth, places where lessons are learned, attitudes are formed, and

body image concerns can be cultivated and metastasized into conviction". The prevalence of social media use, especially among young women, makes it imperative to study the ways in which these individuals are using social media, and the impacts that this media form may have on users. Effects of social media on young women's body image are of particular concern since this population is already at higher risk for negative outcomes (Puglia, 2017). Therefore, further work should be done to examine the factors that influence how young women utilise social media, and the ways in which these factors ultimately influence body esteem on various social media platforms.

References

- Allan, J.D., Mayo, K. & Michel, Y. (1993). Body Size Values of White and Black Women, *Research in Nursing & Health*, 16, 323-333.
- Baturka, N., Hornsby, P. & Schorling, J.B. (2000). Clinical implications of body image among rural African-American women, *Journal of Gender International*, 15, 235-241.
- Bordo, S. (1993). The body and the reproduction of femininity, In: *Unbearable weight: feminism, western culture and the body*. Los Angeles: University of California Press
- Brun, Carl (1997) "The Process and Implications of Doing Qualitative Research: An Analysis of 54 Doctoral Dissertations," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 24: Iss. 4, Article 7. Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol24/iss4/7>
- Clark, L., & Tiggemann, M. (2008). Sociocultural and individual psychological predictors of body image in young girls: A prospective study. *Developmental Psychology*, 44(4), 1124-1134.
- Creswell, J. (2013) . *Qualitative inquiry and research design: choosing among five approaches* (3rd Ed.). London: Sage.
- Dittmar, H, Lloyd B, Dugan, S, Halliwell, E & Cramer H. (2000). The "Body Beautiful": English adolescents' images of ideal bodies. Kluwer Academic Publishers-Plenum Publishers. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1007050517432>
- Dittmar, H. (2009). How do "body perfect" ideals in the media have a negative impact on body image and behaviors? Factors and processes related to self and identity. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 28(1), 1-8.
- Duggan, M., & Smith, A. (2016). *South African social media landscape: Social media update*. Pew research internet project. Pew research center. www.pewinternet.org>26 Retrieved October 25
- Dworkin, A. (1974). *Woman Hating*. New York: Penguin.
- Harris, S. R. (2007). Constructionism in sociology (Ed.). In Holstein, J. A. and Gubrium, J. F. (Eds.). *Handbook of constructionist research*, 231-247. New York: Guilford Press.
- Festinger, L. (1954). A theory of Social Comparison processes. *Human Relations*, 7(2), 117-140.
- Fardouly, J., Diedrichs P.C., Vartanian L.R. (2015). The mediating role of appearance comparisons in the relationship between media usage and self-objectification in Young Women. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0361684315581841>.

Faulds, D.J. (2009). Social media: The new hybrid element of the promotion mix: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/222415599>.

Fouts, G., & Burggraf, K. (2000). Television situation comedies: Female weight, male negative comments, and audience reactions. *Sex Roles*, 42(9-10), 925-932.

Glasser, C. L., Robnett, B., & Feliciano, C. (2009). Internet daters' body type preferences: Race-ethnic and gender differences. *Sex Roles*, 61, 14-33.

Grabe, S., & Hyde, J. S. (2006). Ethnicity and body dissatisfaction among women in the United States: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 132(4), 622-640.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.132.4.622>

Grabe, S. & Shibley, J. (2008). The role of the media in body image concerns among women: A Meta-Analysis of experimental and correlational studies Perloff, R.M. *Sex Roles* (2014) 71: 363. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-014-0384-6>

Greenberg, R. (2010). OUCH! Extreme Ethnic Body Modifications Around the World, <http://www.travora.com/articles/ouch-extreme-ethnic-body-modifications-around-the-world>

Greer, G. (1999). *The whole woman*. London: Transworld Publishers.

Hooks, B. (1996). *Black looks: Race and representation*. Boston, MA: South End Press.

Kalnes, K. (2013). Influence of social media use on adolescent females' perceptions of their body image. (Ed.D., Walden University). ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1435634429?accountid=11789>

Kelly, N.R., Bulik, C.M. & Mazzeo, S.E. (2011). An exploration of body dissatisfaction and perceptions of Black and White girls enrolled in an intervention for overweight children, *Body Image*, 8, 379-384.

Keery, H. & Thompson J. K. (2004). An evaluation of the tripartite influence model of body dissatisfaction and eating disturbance with adolescent girls. *Body Image*, 1(3), 237-251.

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. DOI: 10.1016/j.chb.2015.01.009

Kim, W. S., Ryu, Y. J., & Park, E. A. (2007). The Korean version of objectified body consciousness scales (K-OBCS): Development and validation. *Korean Journal of Psychology*, 26, 329-349.

Kimbrough, A. M., Guadagno R.E., Muscanell N.L. & Dill J. (2013). Gender differences in mediated communication: Women connect more than do men. *Computers in human behavior*. Journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/comphumbeh.

Krueger, R. A. (2015). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research* (5th Ed.).

Kozar, J. M., & Damhorst, M. L. (2008). Comparison of the ideal and real body as women age; relationships to age identity, body satisfaction and importance, and attention to models in advertising. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 27, 197.

Richard M. Lerner, Stuart A. Karabenick & Joyce L. Stuart (1973) Relations among Physical Attractiveness, Body Attitudes, and Self-Concept in Male and Female College Students, *The Journal of Psychology*, 85:1, 119-129, Doi: 10.1080/00223980.1973.9923870

Jackson, L. A., & McGill, O. D. (1996). Body type preferences and body characteristics associated with attractive and unattractive bodies by African Americans and Anglo Americans. *Sex Roles*, 35, 295-307.

Jones, D. (2001). Social comparison and body image: Attractiveness comparisons to models and peers among adolescent girls and boys. *Sex Roles*, 45(9-10), 645-664.

Marshall, M.N. (1996). Sampling for qualitative research. *Family Practice*, 13, (6), 522-525.

May, N. & Pope, C. (1995). *The Qualitative and Quantitative data analysis*. University of Wincosin.

McKinley, N. M. & Hyde, J. S. (1996). The objectified body consciousness scale. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 20, 181-215.

Meyer, S.V., Cukier, K. (2013). *Big data: A revolution that will transform how we live, work and think*. London: John Murray.

McRobie, A (1999). *In the culture society: Art, fashion and popular music*. London: Routledge.

Molloy, B. L. & Herzberger, S. D. (1998). Body images and selfesteem: A comparison of African-American and Caucasian women. *Sex Roles*, 38, 631-643.

Moore, D.C. (1993). Body-image and eating behavior in adolescents. *Journal of the American College of the American Nutrition*, 12, 505-510.

Ogana, W. (2016.) Food decisions and cultural perceptions of overweight and obesity: The case of Zulu women in Durban, South Africa. University of KwaZulu Natal. <http://hdl.handle.net/10413/12719>

Overstreet M. N., Quinn D. M. & Agocha V. B. (2013). Body thinness: The influence of a curvaceous body ideal in body dissatisfaction in black & white women. *Sex Roles*, 63, 91-103.

Patton, T.O. (2006). 'Hey Girl, Am I More than My Hair?': African American Women and Their Struggles with Beauty, Body Image, and Hair, *NWSA Journal*, 18 (2).

Poran, M. (2002). Denying diversity: Perceptions of beauty and social comparison processes among latina, black, and white women. *Sex Roles*, 47, 65-81.

Poran, M. (2006). The Politics of Protection: Body Image, Social Pressures, and the Misrepresentation of Young Black Women, *Sex Roles*, 55, 739-755.

Puglia, D. R. (2017). Social media use and its impact on body image: The effects of body comparison tendency, motivation for social media use, and social media platform on body esteem in young women. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill <http://rightsstatements.org/vocab/InC/1.0/>

Rucker III, C.E. & Cash, T. F. (1991). Body images, body size perceptions, and eating behaviours among African-American and White college women. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 12 (3), 291-299.

Rudd, N. A. & Lennon, S. J. (2000). Body image and appearance-management behaviors in college women. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 18(3), 152-162.

Shabangu, N.C. (2016). Skin, hair and body: Black women's perceptions of beauty on a diverse university campus. University of KwaZulu Natal. <http://hdl.handle.net/10413/14364>

Shotter, J. & Gergen, K. (1994). Series blurb. In T.R. Sarbin and J.I. Kitsuse (Eds.) *Constructing the Social*. London: Sage.

Stice, E., & Shaw, H. E. (2002). Role of body dissatisfaction in the onset and maintenance of eating pathology: A synthesis of research findings. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 53, 985-993.

Stice, E., & Whitenton, K. (2002). Risk factors for body dissatisfaction in adolescent girls: A longitudinal investigation. *Developmental Psychology*, 38, 669-678.

Sutton, H. (2009). *Globalizing ideal beauty: How female copywriters of the J. Walker Thompson advertising agency redefined beauty for the twentieth century*. New York: Palgrave.

Swain, FO. (2012). *Negotiating beauty ideals: perceptions of beauty among Black female university students*. Georgia: Georgia State University.

- Thabethe, F.E (2008). Representation of black African women's bodies in the soap opera, *Generations*. University of KwaZulu Natal. <http://hdl.handle.net/10413/880>
- Thompson, B. (2008). *Black womanhood: Images, icons and ideologies of the African beauty*. Seattle and London: Washington Press.
- Thompson, S. H., Sargent, R. G., & Kemper, K. A. (1996). Black and white adolescent males' perceptions of ideal body size. *Sex Roles*, 34, 391-405.
- Thompson, J. K., Heinberg, L. J., Altabe, M. & Tantleff-Dunn, S. (1999). *Exacting beauty: Theory, assessment, and treatment of body image disturbance*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Thomson, J. K, Coover, M. D, Richards, K. J. Johnsons, S. & Cattarin, J. (1995). Development of body image, eating disturbance, and general psychological functioning in female adolescents: Covariance structure modeling and longitudinal investigations. *International journal of eating disorders*, 18(3):221-36 · December. 10.1002/1098-108X (199511)18:33.0.CO; 2-D
- Tiggemann, M. & Miller, J. (2010). The internet and adolescent girls' weight and satisfaction and drive for thinness. *Sex Roles*, 63(1-2),23-44.
- Tiggemann, M. & Slater, A. (2013). NetGirls: The internet, facebook, and body image concern in adolescent girls. *International Journal Of Eating Disorders*, 46(6), 630-633.
- Tshabalala, L. (2018). Facebook post: women frame men for their insecurities.
- Van Dijck, J. & Poell, T. (2013). Understanding Social Media Logic. *Media and Communication*, 1(1), 2-14.
- Wallis, J., (2015). The effects of social media on the body satisfaction of adolescent and young adult females. Kansas State University. <http://hdl.handle.net/2097/18945>
- Wolf, N. (1990). *The beauty myth: How images of beauty are used against women*, published by Chatto & Windus. ISBN 978-0-385-42397-7.
- Young, L. (1996). The rough side of the mountain: Black women and representation in film, *Reconstructing womanhood, reconstructing feminism: Writings by black women*, pp.175-201. London: Routledge.