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Is it #Gramworthy? An investigation of self-concept clarity, social media and body related issues and how this relates to teenage self presentation on Instagram

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Science in Psychology

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Abstract

The media/body image relationship has been studied extensively for the better part of a decade. However, with the rise of social media in the last five years, it is necessary to consider body image variables in the context of social media.

The relationships between self-concept clarity, social comparison and social physique anxiety have not been extensively examined in relation to adolescent female body image. Some of these factors have been examined intensively in relation to body image, however there has been little exploration into the impact of individual difference variables such as the self-concept and how this may influence body image in adolescent girls as well as how it may influence self-presentation online (Campbell, Trapnell, Heine, Katz & Lavallee, 1996, Krayer, Ingledew & Iphofen, 2008 & Vartanian, 2009).

A group of 12 adolescent girls participated in this research. Data was collected over a 16-week period, with questionnaires being administered online through direct links between two social media sites.

The questionnaires consisted of demographic information, and were assessing Instagram activity, self-concept clarity, social comparison, social physique anxiety. A content analysis followed the questionnaire phase and examined the online profile content of participants in terms of photo composition, features, makeup, clothing and feedback.

All measures were psychometrically evaluated and generated respectable levels of internal consistency and reliability. Correlational analyses established relationships between self-concept clarity and impression management, and between self-concept clarity, self-enhancement and self-deception. This suggested that a higher level of self-concept clarity among adolescent females corresponded to a greater sense of entitlement and narcissistic

behaviour on their online profiles. Limitations and recommendations for future research are discussed.

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Lastly, to my participants, thank you for your bravery to step out and share your experiences in this study. You have provided valuable insight into the world of social media, and have made this research possible.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern 15/052

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