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Selfie feedback on Instagram: The impact on self-esteem and appearance satisfaction

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The aim of this study was to determine whether likes and positive appearance comments received on selfies posted on Instagram relate to women's self-esteem and appearance satisfaction, and if this is impacted by appearance contingent self-worth. Women with Instagram accounts who had posted at least one selfie within the past two months were asked to complete online questionnaires and permit researchers to retrospectively code their Instagram account. Researchers recorded the number of likes and comments received on each posted selfie and then coded whether or not comments were positive and appearance-related. It was hypothesized that the average proportion of likes and positive appearance comments received on selfies over two months would be positively associated with women's appearance satisfaction and global self-esteem during that time period, and that this relationship would be more pronounced among women higher in appearance contingent self-worth.

Fourty-eight Instagram accounts were coded. After controlling for BMI and depressive symptoms, there were non-significant relationships between the average proportion of likes and comments received on selfies and appearance satisfaction. Further, appearance contingent self-worth did not moderate the impact of average proportion of received likes or comments on appearance satisfaction. The main effects of average proportion of received likes and appearance comments on global self-esteem also were non-significant. However, there was a potentially significant interaction between appearance contingent self-worth and the average proportion of likes received on global self-esteem. Thus, the impact of average proportion of received likes on self-esteem may depend on women's level of appearance contingent self-worth. However, given that only 48 Instagram accounts were coded due to difficulties with recruitment, all analyses were underpowered and limited conclusions can be drawn about the relationships between selfie feedback on one hand and trait self-esteem and appearance satisfaction on the other.