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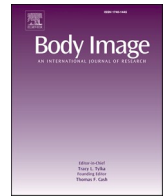
"OMG you look amazing": A systematic examination of the text-based interactions surrounding UK adolescent girls' self-images on Instagram

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A R T I C L E I N F O	A B S T R A C T
	Appearance-related content is ubiquitous across highly visual social media platforms, in both imagery and text. The present study aims to explore the content of text-based interactions initiated by self-images on Instagram. Seventeen adolescent girls from the UK (*Age M* = 15.12; *SD* = 1.80; *Range* = 12–18) provided data from their most recent Instagram posts (up to 10 posts) as part of one-to-one interviews. This included images (*n* = 85), captions (*n* = 85), direct comments on images (*n* = 630) and participants' first replies to direct comments (*n* = 459). An inductive-deductive content analysis was used to analyse Instagram data, and a template analysis was used to analyse the interview data to aid with the interpretation of the content. Analyses showed positive appearance-related compliments were highly prevalent on Instagram posts (79.2 % of comments) and were considered the norm. Compliments tended to focus on general, rather than specific appearance qualities. Girls tended to respond to compliments using likes, gratitude, or affectionate expressions. The findings highlight the role of self-objectification and self-presentation strategies in dictating the norms of adolescent girls' text-based interactions on Instagram. Implications and directions for future research are discussed.

1. Introduction

Instagram, like other highly visual social media platforms, is saturated with appearance-related content, from the dominance of appearance-ideal images and videos shared to the high appearance potency of comments and interactions (Bell et al., 2024; Burnell, George, et al., 2021). Use of highly visual platforms has been linked to body image concerns in young adults and adolescents (Cohen et al., 2018; Roberts et al., 2022). This research has tended to examine the content of images posted and shared to social media, and the associated consequences of engaging in these behaviours (Bell et al., 2018; Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2018). However, images are only part of the functionality of highly visual social media platforms as they are designed in a way that encourages users to interact through text about these images (e.g., comment on images, caption images). While some studies have started to document the prevalence of appearance commentary in interactions on social media (Burnell, George, et al., 2021; Feltman & Szymanski, 2018), little research has considered the *content* of appearance interactions on Instagram, nor how they are understood by those who post them (for exception see Paddock & Bell, 2021). Focusing on adolescent

girls, the current study aims to examine the content of text-based interactions that occur alongside self-images on Instagram, and how these are interpreted by the poster.

1.1. Self-objectification and appearance commentary

Adolescence (characterised as someone aged 13–19 years; Steinberg, 2014) is a critical development period, wherein appearance concerns typically emerge, especially for girls (Rodgers et al., 2014). Adolescents experience considerable biological and cognitive changes that heighten awareness of the body and appearance and increase self-consciousness (Terán et al., 2020). They also become more sensitive to their socio-cultural environment (Blakemore & Mills, 2014) wherein many problematic appearance messages may be transmitted (Kierans & Swords, 2016). Objectification theory is useful for understanding the consequences of living and growing up as an adolescent girl in a society that routinely objectifies women based upon their appearance (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Moradi & Huang, 2008). Within Westernised societies, objectification occurs when women are treated as objects to the extent that they become valued based on their appearance and sexual function

rather than their personhood (Heflick & Goldenberg, 2014). Frequent experiences of sexual objectification (e.g., leering, wolf-whistling, exposure to images of sexualised beauty ideals) serve to shape self-body relations, such that individuals come to view and treat themselves as an object to be looked at and evaluated upon – this is self-objectification (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Self-objectification is associated with greater body dissatisfaction due to girls adopting an internal viewer's perspective on the body and appearance which in turn makes girls feel negative towards about their body as they believe other people are criticising and judging it (Terán et al., 2020).

Appearance commentary refers to everyday appearance conversations that occur among friends intended to have a positive impact and is often known as "body talk" within the research literature (Bell et al., 2021). Traditionally, body talk has been defined as self-disparaging conversations about appearance that occur among the peer group (e. g., "I'm so fat", and in response "no you're not, if you're fat I'm humongous"; Nichter & Vuckovic, 1994), with common responses encompassing denial (e.g., "no way") and empathy (e.g., responding with a similar feeling - "I feel that way too"; Salk & Engeln-Maddox, 2011). However, more recently in the literature, body talk is broadly defined as encompassing interactions that involve both positive and negative comments made about the self and others (Bell et al., 2021; Lin et al., 2021) and has been identified as common among adolescent peer group interactions (Arroyo & Brunner, 2016; Barbeau et al., 2022). A positive body image perspective suggests that appearance commentary should focus on body functionality (i.e., what your body can do) rather than what it looks like otherwise appearance commentary on what someone looks like reinforces body and beauty ideals that are not good for body image (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015). However, appearance commentary may also be a way of showing appreciation of different versions of beauty (e.g., compliments on #bopo content on social media; Rodgers et al., 2022) and a way for young girls to accept and admire their appearance (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015). However, research has found that the frequency of appearance compliments is associated with increased levels of self-objectification and body surveillance (i.e., the habitual and constant monitoring of body's appearance; Calogero et al., 2009), and other research has also linked receiving compliments with greater body dissatisfaction (Bailey & Ricciardelli, 2010). These frequent experiences of appearance commentary may enhance the importance of appearance standards for adolescent girls and provide an everyday reinforcement of these sociocultural pressures for attractiveness (Kvardova et al., 2023).

1.2. Highly visual social media platforms

In the digital age, social media is a primary communication tool for adolescents (Uhls et al., 2017), and an important context wherein appearance commentary occurs. Adolescents frequently use highly visual social media platforms such as Instagram t(Digital 2024 Report, 2024), of which mostly centre interactions around the sharing of images or videos (Nesi et al., 2018). On these platforms, users upload photos or videos, sometimes enhanced by filters (Hong et al., 2020) and provide context or commentary to visual content with text-based captions. These captions play a pivotal role in framing the image, offering context, storytelling, or inviting engagement (Paddock & Bell, 2021). Other users can engage with the post by liking the post, commenting, or using emojis, creating a dialogue that blends textual and visual elements (Nesi et al., 2018). Different interactions serve different purposes. Research shows that likes on a post serve as a quick, low-effort signal of approval or agreement and are highly sought for by adolescents when posting self-images to social media (Bell, 2019). Emojis may add nuance to responses, conveying emotion or humour in a way that textual comments might not (Kaye et al., 2016).

Posts, and their accompanying interactions, vary in terms of publicness and permanency depending on the platform and/or share settings (Nesi et al., 2018). Instagram is designed to include permanent

visual content (i.e., post) and ephemeral visual content (i.e., stories), and users can engage in private chats (i.e., direct message) or public interactions (i.e., comments on a permanent post). The present study focuses on highly public and permanent Instagram posts, which are usually shared within a large network, making the interactions surrounding them inherently performative and aimed at a broader audience (de Vaate et al., 2018). This dynamic allows for asynchronous communication; while the initial image and caption of the post might be curated by the poster, responses in the form of comments can follow at any time and vary widely in tone, length, and intent, to which the poster (and other users) can respond (Nesi et al., 2018). These exchanges are mediated by the features of the platform—such as likes and comments (Nesi et al., 2018) – but each social media platform has its own unique norms and affordances, shaping user behaviour in distinct ways.

1.3. Appearance commentary on social media

Research has shown that Instagram often features a high proportion of appearance-potent content (e.g., self-images; Bell et al., 2024; Boepple et al., 2016; Ghaznavi & Taylor, 2015; Talbot et al., 2017) and remains a key tool for teens to share carefully curated images and interact socially, driven by its visual focus. The design of Instagram constrains interactions so that they mostly occur around these self-images (e.g., through liking them, commenting on them, and captioning them to initiate interactions). Thus, the multitude of ways interactions can occur around these images not only makes appearance commentary more frequent but also likely to occur differently to their offline counterparts due to the specific design features of social media that transform them. Such a conceptualisation is consistent with the transformative framework of online communications, which argues that adolescent interactions and experiences are not simply mirrored from offline to online but instead they are impacted by the specific design features of social media sites (Nesi et al., 2018).

Appearance commentary on social media, including self-deprecating remarks, and other forms of body talk (e.g., positive comments such as "you look so good" or comparisons such as "I wish I looked like you") have been found to be associated with body image concerns and self-objectification in young women (Wang et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2022). Survey research has revealed that it is more common to receive positive appearance commentary on social media, than negative appearance commentary (Feltman & Szymanski, 2018; Rideout & Fox, 2018). However, these measures have simply been adapted from offline use (e.g., "my friends and I talk about our bodies frequently"; Jones, 2004) to online use (e.g., "on social media, my friends and I talk about our bodies frequently; Wang et al., 2019). Thus, though these measures may provide some insight into the frequency of appearance commentary on social media or whether comments are positive or negative, they provide little insight into the specific content of these comments (e.g., content of appearance compliments) or how they are interpreted by users. Understanding the content of online comments may provide greater insight into how an appearance culture may be created and perpetuated through text as well as through the images posted on social media.

Recent qualitative research has started to explore the meanings behind appearance commentary on social media. Body talk on public social media channels is more likely to be characterised by compliments followed by the denial (e.g., "don't be silly") or reciprocation (e.g., "says you") of these compliments (Burnell, George, et al., 2021; Paddock & Bell, 2021), rather than direct self-deprecation (e.g., "I look fat") that has been observed in offline contexts (Mills et al., 2019; Salk & Engeln-Maddox, 2011). In support of this, Paddock and Bell (2021) describe how adolescent girls often post selfies with the caption "feel cute might delete later", which echoes the self-deprecating and modest tone of offline body talk ("does my bum look big in this?"; Mills & Fuller-Tyszkiewicz, 2017) while acknowledging the cultural norm where it is commonly understood that users will only post their best

images (Bell, 2019; Griffiths & Balakrishnan, 2018).

To a lesser extent, research has used content analysis to systematically examine social media data in terms of its appearance-related commentary. Chrisler et al. (2013) conducted a content analysis on Twitter (now known as X), a primarily text-based social media platform, of posts that occurred during a Victoria's Secret fashion show and found numerous positive and negative appearance-related remarks, oriented towards both the self- and others. More recently, Burnell, George et al.'s, (2021) content analysis found that college students were more likely to receive positive comments on their most recent Instagram posts especially in response to the posting of a self-image. Comments were also found to be gendered; women received more positive appearance commentary whereas men received more negative appearance commentary. Overall, receiving appearance commentary – was linked to greater social media consciousness and body surveillance, regardless of whether comments were positive or negative (Burnell, George, et al., 2021). However, this study only assessed whether comments received on an Instagram post are positive or negative. More qualitative research that examines the nuance of social media appearance-related interactions is needed.

1.4. The present study: aims and research questions

Though research is growing, little is still known about the nature of adolescents' appearance commentary on social media, including the comments they receive and how they respond. The present research aims to examine the content of adolescents' real-life appearance commentary on Instagram, using naturally occurring data taken from adolescents' own Instagram profiles. More specifically, we use inductive-deductive content analysis to analyse the caption, comments and replies that are attached to self-images posted to Instagram (as per, Bell et al., 2024; Jankowski et al., 2014). Furthermore, we draw on data from interviews with adolescents who posted this content to aid interpretation and context to the content that is being analysed (Kirshner et al., 2005). This research aims to address the following research questions:

RQ₁. What is the content of captions, direct comments, and participants' first responses to comments posted on Instagram?

RQ₂. How do adolescents understand and interpret interactions surrounding self-images on Instagram?

2. Method

2.1. Participants

Seventeen adolescent girls (*Age M* = 15.12; *SD* = 1.80; *Range* = 12–18) were recruited to the study through their parents. We aimed to recruit a maximally diverse sample as possible within the time limits of the project by advertising and recruiting through a variety of contacts (e. g., youth groups, social media, university mailing lists). Parents had responded to advertisements about the study posted on social media (e. g., posts on personal Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts that were then shared numerous times), university mailing lists, and youth group mailing lists. All participants self-identified as girls, and were recruited from cities across England, including Birmingham, Brighton, Leeds, London, Newcastle, and York. Sixteen participants identified as White, and one identified as Mixed Race. All participants have been assigned pseudonyms for anonymity and confidentiality. The study adhered to the ethical guidelines of the British Psychological Society and had received ethical approval from York St John University ethics committee. Written consent was obtained from parents and participants prior to the interview.

2.2. Procedure

2.2.1. Interview

Interviews combined semi-structured questions with the scroll-back technique (Robards & Lincoln, 2020). The scroll-back technique involves using participants' own social media data as an interview prompt. The interviewer and participant simultaneously scroll back through social media profiles (Robards & Lincoln, 2020) to explore participants' perceptions of the specific contexts in which body talk occurs on Instagram posts. Participants scrolled back through their Instagram posts discussing the images, the caption, the likes, and the interaction that occurred in the comments section. Participants were asked to scroll through their ten most recent posts that were selfies or images that included them in it for discussion. The questions during this process aimed to ask participants about the post (e.g., "How did you feel when you received that comment?"). All interviews were facilitated by the first author. At the end of the interview, participants were thanked for their participation and reminded about their right to withdraw. Participants received a £ 10 Amazon e-voucher for taking part. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed.

2.2.2. Instagram data extraction

During the interview, participants were asked to supply their Instagram data. Though we requested participants' ten most recent posts, no participants had ten posts available on their Instagram accounts. Participants explained that though they had posted more than this historically, they had engaged in a process of self-curation wherein they deleted or archived previous posts. Participants also disclosed that their Instagram accounts were private. Overall, we extracted a total of 85 posts (*M* = 5.00, *SD* = 1.62, *Range* = 3–8). Posts were captured using the "Screenshot™" screen-capture software installed on MacBook Air, which included the image, caption, number of likes, every comment made by other users on the post and every response to these comments made by the participant. Extracted data were stored as a series of jpegs and pseudo-anonymised using photo-editing software to remove usernames, location data and cover faces. Table 1 shows participants' demographic information and a summary of the Instagram data provided for each participant.

For the content analysis, we analysed four components of each extracted Instagram post including **(1) Images** that included the participant (e.g., selfie), **(2) Captions, (3) Direct comments** on the image (i.e., comments from others directly on the image) and (**4) First replies** from the participant to the direct comments (see Fig. 1 for illustration). Although extracted, images that excluded the participant or featured irrelevant content, typically elicited non-appearance related commentary (e.g., "cool dog") so these images were excluded from the analysis.

2.3. Content analysis

Inductive-deductive quantitative content analysis was used to systematically examine the content of adolescents' Instagram interactions (Krippendorff, 2004; Merriam, 2009). The analysis focused on the components of the Instagram post that we had extracted as described above (i.e., images, captions, direct comments and first replies - see Fig. 1). Different coding criteria were developed for each of the four components.

2.3.1. Codebook

Codes were developed on the basis of past research, participants' interpretation of their own activities from interview data, and the researchers' perceptions of what was important (i.e., relevant to the research questions) within the data set. To do this, existing research was first examined to identify potential coding categories, including studies that have examined social media imagery (e.g., Bell et al., 2024), compliments in the context of gendered stereotypes (e.g., Rees-Miller, 2011)

Table 1
Participant Demographic Information and Summary of Instagram Data Provided.

| Pseudonym Name	Age	Ethnicity	Posts (N)	Likes (sum)	Likes (average per post)	Comments (sum)	Comments (average per post)
Jasmine	12	White	7	247	35.29	25	3.57
Jodie	13	White	6	113	18.83	18	3.00
Lucy	14	White	3	172	57.33	17	5.67
Chelsea	15	White	8	578	72.25	49	6.13
Zoe	17	White	6	-	-	1	0.2
Isla	18	White	5	1129	225.80	48	9.60
Shannon	16	White	6	864	144.00	49	8.17
Carly	13	White	3	165	55.00	12	4.00
Mya	18	White	7	883	126.14	36	5.14
Hannah	17	White	4	605	151.25	11	2.75
Lila	15	White	4	475	118.75	99	24.75
Darcie	16	White	6	285	47.5	25	4.17
Alex	14	Mixed race	4	-	-	46	11.5
Emily	13	White	3	207	69.00	61	20.33
Kayleigh	15	White	6	360	60.00	72	12.00
Holly	15	White	3	525	175.00	52	17.33
Lily	16	White	4	-	-	11	2.75
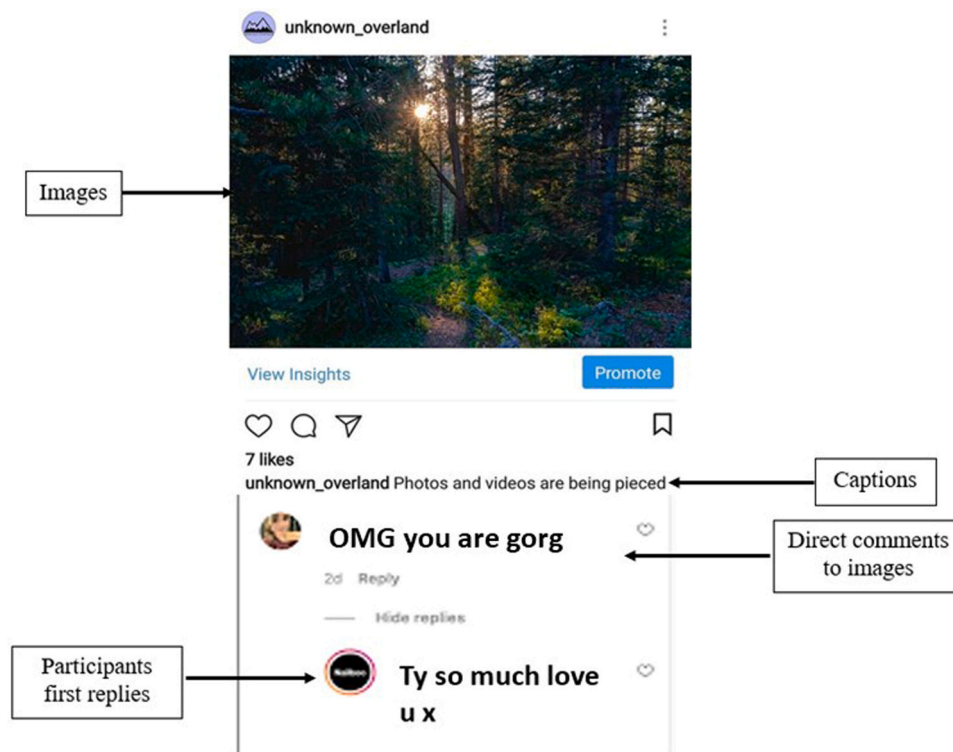
Fig. 1. An example of the Instagram data extracted from each of participants.

and offline body talk (e.g., Salk & Englen-Maddox, 2011). Next, the first author familiarised themselves with the Instagram and interview data, creating any additional codes that seemed relevant. For example, for the first response to a direct comment, the first author noticed within the dataset that it was quite common for there to be no response, and so this was developed as a code. The first author also remained open to new coding categories that were apparent within the data set and more appropriate for the context of social media, such as use of emoji.

2.3.1.1. Images. Images were coded using categories used in past research (e.g., selfie, group image, other; Bell et al., 2018). The final coding categories were: (1) *Selfie,* (2) *Groupie,* (3) *Multiple Images in One Post.* See Table 2 for detailed coding criteria.

2.3.1.2. Captions. As no content analysis has examined captions on

Instagram images, a priori codes were developed based on previous qualitative research. Past research describes how some adolescents explicitly seek out appearance commentary in image captions (e.g., "not sure about this, might delete"; Paddock & Bell, 2021), so an appearance and a non-appearance caption category were developed. Three subcategories were created within the appearance-related category to reflect the different types of appearance-related captions described by adolescents (Paddock & Bell, 2021): self-deprecating, positive appearance remarks and neutral appearance remarks. A neutral appearance remark were captions that were neither positive nor negative but simply stated something about appearance such as 'pink hair'. An additional two categories were created inductively based on recurrent content within the Instagram data: emoji only and no caption. The final categories were: (1) Non-*Appearance-Related* (2) *Appearance-Related, (2a) self-deprecating appearance remarks; (2b) positive appearance remarks, (2c)*

Table 2

Image coding categories, definitions, frequency of occurrence and Cohen's Kappa.

Category	Definition	Count (N_{total} =77)	Percent	Cohen's Kappa
Selfie	Image of the participant (taken by the self or others).	61	79.2 %	.97
Groupie	Images that include multiple people in a picture, including the participant (e.g., a picture of participant with group of friends)	12	15.6 %	.90
Multiple Images in one post	Posts to Instagram that include multiple pictures (e. g., multiple selfies and groupies). The participant is in the images.	4	5.2 %	1.0

neutral appearance remarks, (3) *Emoji Only*, (4) *No Caption*. See Table 3 for detailed coding criteria and examples.

2.3.1.3. Direct comments. First, codes were developed based on existing research examining gendered compliments in offline settings (Rees-Miller, 2011). This research identified four different types of compliments: appearance, performance, possessions, and personality. Next, as our research questions are explicitly focused on appearance, we developed subcategories of the appearance category, based on past research (Calogero, 2012) and interview data. Within the appearance category, "General" and "Specific" subtypes were created to reflect adolescents' discussion in interviews of how these could be interpreted differently. A further "weight" sub-category was created to reflect compliments about weight, considering past research documenting their prevalence in offline settings. A "self-disparaging" sub-category was created in light of past research indicating this is a common response to appearance comments in both online and offline settings (Paddock & Bell, 2021; Salk & Engeln-Maddox, 2011). Many comments featured just

Table 3

Caption coding categories, definitions, frequency of occurrence and Cohen's Kappa.

Category	Definition with example	Count (N_{total} = 77)	Percent	Cohen's Kappa
Non-Appearance Related	Captions that do not reference appearance, usually a generalised description of the image. (e. g., *I love the snow*)	37	48.1 %	*1.0*
Appearance Related	Captions that explicitly refer to the appearance of the participant. Subcategories included:	8	10.39 %	
	- positive appearance comment (e.g., *I feel pretty on my bday*)	*1*	*1.3 %*	1.0
	- neutral appearance comment that is neither positive nor negative (e.g., *pink hair*)	*6*	*7.79 %*	1.0
	- self-disparaging appearance comment (e.g., *anyone that has clear skin is obviously a witch*)	*1*	*1.3 %*	1.0
Emoji Only	Captions containing emojis only. (e.g., " ❄️ 🌴 🤍 ")	25	32.7 %	1.0
No Caption	Instances where no captions are included.	7	8.81 %	1.0

Note: italics represent percentages within the subcategory

an emoji, and so an emoji category was created. In the interviews, all emoji-based responses were construed positively by adolescents, but it was difficult to distinguish whether this positive response was in relation to appearance or not (e.g., a heart could indicate appearance-related approval and/or general affection). Therefore, the emoji category could not be split into appearance vs. non-appearance. All emojis were perceived as positive in nature, though, and none were considered negative (e.g., love hearts, flame emoji, love heart eyes). There were other types of non-appearance comments that were salient in interview and Instagram data, and so were coded too, namely 'experience' and 'affection'. The final coding categories were: (1) Appearance-related, including (1a) Appearance Weight; (1b) Appearance Specific; (1c) Appearance General; (1d) Self-deprecating and Comparison; (2) Emoji Only; (3) Non-Appearance Category; (3a) Performance; (3b) Possession; (3c) Personality; (3d) Experience; (3e) Affection; (3 f) Other. Table 4 shows each coding category and subcategory, including detailed coding criteria and examples.

2.3.1.4. First replies. We adapted coding criteria for offline body talk from past studies to reflect the online environment. More specifically, denial (e.g., "omg shush"), empathy (e.g., "I feel that way too sometimes"), and probing (e.g., "why would you say that?") from Salk and Engeln-Maddox (2011) were included as these were the only codes that made sense in a social media environment. For example, the "action together" category (e.g., "we should diet together") would not work in a social media environment because this would not make sense in the context of interacting asynchronously and in response to an appearance or non-appearance comment. The category "reciprocation" was added considering Mills et al. (2019) who found reciprocation was common in body talk. We also identified further codes that reflected common replies in the social media and interview data, including emoji only, liked, gratitude, and affection. The final coding criteria were: (1) Denial; (2) Empathy; (3) Probing; (4) Reciprocate; (5) Emoji Only; (6) Gratitude; (7) Affection; (8) Liked; (9) No Response; (10) Other. See Table 5 for detailed coding criteria and examples.

2.3.2. Coding procedure

All finalised codes were discussed in detail by all three authors and edited where appropriate. The coding categories for images were mutually exclusive, however the categories were not mutually exclusive for captions, direct comments and participants' first reply, so the text could be coded into more than one category if needed. The codebook was developed using the whole sample as the first author read through the data in detail first in order to develop codes. The first author initially coded the data set, and then a 25 % random subsample was coded by the second author (Neuendorf, 2011). The first author met with the second author to provide some training about the codebook and the second author was also provided a table that included each code name, a definition and an example (similar to information included in Tables 2–5). Data were coded blindly to assess inter-rater reliability. Cohen's kappa showed high inter-rater reliability between the two coders for images (κ =.90 - 1.0), captions (κ = 1.0), direct comments (κ =.71 - 1.0) and participants first responses (κ =.75 - 1.0).

2.4. Template analysis of interview data

Interview data were analysed using template analysis, an iterative form of inductive-deductive thematic analysis (Brooks et al., 2015; King, 1998; King & Brooks, 2016). We analysed the data through a critical realist lens which poses that we can provide insight into girls' experiences on Instagram, whilst also recognising that as researchers we play a role in constructing this knowledge and so the analysis may have been influenced by this (Archer et al., 1998). Although the interview data was used to develop the codes for the content analysis, the template analysis of the interview data was conducted afterwards. To perform the

Table 4

Direct comments coding categories, definitions, frequency of occurrence and Cohen's Kappa.

Category	Definition and example	Count (Ntotal = 630)	Percent	Cohen's Kappa
1a. Appearance Weight	Comment containing a compliment that focuses on someone's weight (e.g., *"you look so skinny in this"*)	0	0 %	1.0
1b. Appearance Specific	Comment containing a compliment that focuses on a specific aspect of appearance such as the face or body (e.g., *"Your hair* 😍😍😍")	4	0.63 %	1.0
1c. Appearance General	Comment containing a general appearance compliment (e.g., *"Omg you are gorgeous"* or *"OMG wow!"*)[a]	385	61.11 %	.88
1d. Self-deprecating and comparison	Comment that shows comparison to the person in the mage or self-deprecating about own appearance through comparison (e.g. *"girl can we swap* 🫠🙂")	11	1.75 %	.86
2. Emoji Only	Comment containing an emoji only. (e.g., 😍😍😍😍😍😍😍)	105	16.67 %	.98
3a. Performance	Comment containing a compliment that focuses on someone's general skill or ability (e.g., *"How on Earth are you doing ur liner so perfectly?? Ugh* 🫠")	7	1.11 %	.80
3b. Possession	Comment containing a compliment that focuses on any tangible object in the image (e.g., *"that's a nice mirror"*)	5	0.79 %	1.0
3c. Personality	Comment containing a compliment that focuses on a personal quality (e.g., *"ur so edgy wtf these r amazing"*)	6	0.96 %	1.0
3d. Experience	Comment that focuses on the experience in the image (e.g., *"hope ur having the bestttt time* 🤍")	7	1.11 %	.75
3e. Affection	Comment that shows affection to the person in the image (e.g., *"Omg I miss you so much* 🤣🤣😍😆🤍🤍🤍")	52	8.25 %	.88
3 f. Other	Comments that contain content that do not fit into the other categories (e.g., *"lmao we look so guilty in the chips one"*)	48	7.62 %	.71

[a] The "General" subtype included comments such as "OMG WOW" despite not explicitly referencing appearance, since adolescents interpreted these as appearance compliments (e.g., "even just saying wow or you know it just kind of makes you feel good about your appearance"; Jodie, 13).

template analysis, the first author familiarised themselves with the data by reading interview transcripts, extracted Instagram data, and content analysis findings. Next, an initial coding template was developed wherein the a priori themes reflected the units of analysis for the content analysis, i.e., images, captions, direct comments, first responses. As the data were then coded, themes were organised into meaningful clusters on a subset of interview data. The template was applied to the rest of the interview data, where further codes were developed and themes were refined, meaning amendments were made to the template. Thus, themes were developed using a combination of deductive (based on a priori themes) and inductive (responding to the data provided) coding. During this process, the first and third author met regularly where the coding framework was discussed and scrutinised in detail to check that the framework fully represented the data. To do this, the third author checked subsamples of the analysis and we discussed any issues as a team before finalising the template. The final template informed the development of three themes that will be discussed in relation to the content analysis.

Before presenting the findings, it is important to highlight our positionality in the context of this analytic process. Firstly, a critical realist position was adopted (as described above) and so from this perspective we accept potential subjectivity in the research process, encouraging us to reflect on any biases. Recognising biases, all authors are White women with expertise in body image research and we all use Instagram to share images but are cognizant that our ways of using Instagram are different to the young people in the study. Therefore, throughout the data collection and analytic processes we have consciously discussed these biases to increase the objectivity of the analysis.

3. Results

A total of 85 posts and captions and 632 direct comments and replies were extracted. Eight images were excluded as they were not self-images and so the final analysis included 77 images and captions, 630 direct comments and first replies. We present the findings of the content analysis followed by the theme that represents them within the interview data. Three themes were developed: (1) *Initiating body talk through self-images and captions*, (2) *Type of comments received is important*, and (3) *How to respond to a comment? Reciprocate instead of accepting*. See Tables 2–5 for count, percentage, and Cohen's Kappa for all four Instagram components.

3.1. Images

Most self-images were selfies (79.2 %, *n* = 61). Groupies were less common (15.6 %; *n* = 12), followed by posts including multiple pictures of both selfies and groupies (5.2 %; *n* = 4).

3.2. Captions

Very few image captions were appearance-related (9.5 %; *n* = 8). Of these, one caption was positive (*"I feel pretty on my bday* 🥰"), one was a self-deprecating appearance remark (e.g., *"anyone that has clear skin is obviously a witch"*), and the remainder were neutral (i.e., remarks that were neither positive nor negative but simply stated something about appearance such as 'pink hair'). Other captions (*n* = 43) were non-appearance related (50.6 %) (*"so much love for last night"*) and 25 captions included an emoji only (29.4 %). Posts with no captions were less

Table 5

First replies coding categories, definitions, frequency of occurrence and Cohen's Kappa.

Category	Definition and example	Count (Ntotal = 630)	Percent	Cohen's Kappa
Denial	Responses containing explicit denial of the compliment or that involve stopping or shutting it down (e.g., *"omg shush"*)	15	2.38 %	.75
Empathy	Responses to self-disparaging comments containing statements that indicate that they feel the same way (e.g., *"I feel that way too sometimes"*)	0	0	1.0
Probing	Responses to self-disparaging remarks which question why a commenter feels that way (e.g., *"why would you say that?"*)	0	0	1.0
Reciprocate	Responses that involve reciprocating the comment/compliment or responding with another compliment (e.g., *"says u 😍"*)	69	10.95 %	.82
Emoji Only	Responses containing an emoji only (e.g., " 🫠 😼")	67	10.64 %	.94
Gratitude	Responses containing expression of gratitude or that show acceptance of the compliment (e.g., *omg thank you"*)	132	20.95 %	.81
Affection	Responses containing an expression of love or affection. Also, responses that express interest in catching up (e.g., *"I love u"*)	127	20.16 %	.81
No Response	Instances where no response was provided by the participant, including no liked response	83	13.17 %	1.0
Liked but no written response	Instances where the comment was 'liked' by the participant but no written response	87	13.81 %	1.0
Other	Responses that do not fit into the other categories (e.g., *"art in its finest form"*)	50	7.94 %	.75
Liked	Instances where the comment was 'liked' by the participant (the comment could both be liked and responded to or just liked).	313	-	1.0

Note: The table indicates two versions of the 'liked' category: (1) liked but no written response – this accounts for the 87 comments where there was no written response, but the participant had liked the comment; (2) Liked which includes a count of all comments that were liked – this includes those comments that also had a written response, hence such a large count.

common (10.6 %; *n* = 9).

3.2.1. Theme 1: initiating body talk through images and captions

This theme captures the complex interplay between captions and images, and how the combination of the two is key to understanding the role of self-presentation on social media. In interviews, all girls described that when posting an image to social media, the caption and image may work together, for some, to initiate a conversation around appearance, in the form of comments or likes. Captions were constructed to be as important as images by some girls who described experiencing pressure to caption self-images *"it's like you have to validate yourself by saying something cool as a caption"* (Holly, 15). It was also clear that although some girls felt the caption was important, they avoided captioning self-images with any type of appearance-related remarks *"when people do caption it saying something bad about their own appearance they do it to try and get I don't know reassurance but I don't you know people are going to comment and tell you you look nice anyway so like what's the point"* (Chelsea, 15), which may suggest that the image is enough to elicit appearance comments and reassurance. Further they also discussed how the caption plays an important self-presentation role, especially when feeling more self-conscious about posting a self-image:

"*I don't think the caption is necessarily the most important part but I don't really put a lot of thought into it, I think it's more just trying to be I guess relatable cause sometimes I feel a little embarrassed about posting selfies because I've sort of grew up being 'oh I'm never going to be one of those girls' cause it was quite judgey but then I started doing it more and I enjoy it because it feels nice to sort of be confident but then the caption feels like I need to try and humanise it a bit like be weird or something.*" (Darcie, aged 16).

That said, not all girls agreed that captions were necessary. For example, some girls described how captions were not that important to them and were mainly used as a way of explaining the image *"I don't really usually put captions on my thing unless I want to explain it, I don't really know I just don't usually put captions cause it just doesn't matter to me"* (Alex, 14), suggesting that it may not be as important for all young girls when posting to social media.

3.3. Direct comments

Appearance comments were the most common response from others to self-images (79.2 %; *n* = 499). Within these appearance comments, general positive appearance comments were more common (61.1 %; *n* = 385), than self-deprecating (1.8 %; *n* = 11) or specific appearance-related comments (0.5 %; *n* = 4), and none were weight related. Emojis were the second most common type of comment (16.7 %; *n* = 105). Of the non-appearance related comments, affection was most common (8.3 %; *n* = 52), as were those coded as other (7.6 %; *n* = 48). There were few comments about performance (1.1 %; *n* = 7), experience (1.1 %; *n* = 7), personality (1 %; *n* = 6), or possessions (0.8 %; *n* = 5).

3.3.1. Theme 2: type of comments received is important

All girls described the importance of the type of comments received on Instagram posts. Receiving appearance commentary on Instagram was constructed as the norm *"the comments are pretty much always about appearance … appearance is quite a big thing especially on Instagram because it's like where you post like your own things like images of you and erm that's mostly based on appearance it's sort of weird if you got a comment that said 'nice personality' - which is wrong"* (Isla, 18). Some girls described how they would delete their posts due to receiving a lack of comments *"sometimes I want to post something but then I have deleted posts cause it wasn't really getting that many comments so I just got rid"* (Alex, 14). They expressed ambivalent feelings towards receiving general vs. specific appearance-related comments. Specific appearance-related comments had the ability to make the receiver question the other aspects of their appearance that weren't commented on *"I get 'your eyes are nice' and I'm like well what about the rest of my face?"* (Rebecca, 16), whereas some girls found general comments have less meaning:

"*You always get general comments that are like 'you're gorgeous' or 'you're pretty' or 'wow' and I'm like meh I think I appreciate it and everything but it's very generalised and not meaningful, it's not personal its more just words.*" (Chelsea, 15).

They further described how commenting with a specific appearance

compliment (e.g., "your eyes") may highlight this feature to the poster in a negative way *"I don't tend to comment on quite specific things especially with appearance because it's so difficult to change and if you're complimenting specific things, it might make them notice those things more and it could actually have a negative effect"* (Lily, 16).

Self-deprecating appearance comparisons were usually interpreted as a compliment, but some girls also described how these remarks also served a self-presentational function for the commenter, by positioning the commenter as modest *"this comment "can I be you" I don't know it made me feel good about myself, but it does make her seem not as confident"* (Lila, 15). The self-deprecation was never taken too seriously *"obviously like about the whole hating yourself comment thing obviously Zoe put that but she doesn't mean it in like a serious way like it's not funny but it's like we I said to her like 'oh no you look fine Zoe what do you mean' … and the one's that Zoe posted I just remember I didn't like myself in them but I just let her post them anyways"* (Hannah, 17). Thus, instead of raising concerns about the commentors' own body image concern, they often signified friendship and supported peer relationships by functioning as a compliment.

All girls described how comments containing emojis were universally interpreted positively; as either an appearance-focused compliment or to show affection *"and you know how they put the love heart eyes it's kind of just making you feel good about yourself"* (Alex, 14). Often the same emoji could serve both functions. Interestingly, they discussed how there are certain ways to compliment certain types of friends, with use of emoji being common with people you know less well, suggesting an emoji only comment is still an appearance-related compliment: *"if I'm not so close with them and they're like online friend then I'd probably just erm comment erm the heart eye emojis"* (Lucy, 14).

Although less common, there were still comments that were about performance (e.g., "you are so good at makeup") or experience (e.g., "have a good time"). Some girls described these types of comments as *"weird"* (Isla, 18) due to the highly appearance-focused nature of Instagram, but others described a preference for these types of comments rather than appearance-related comments:

"*I think I'd prefer the comments about the post or the activity that we'd been doing or something like that because I don't really like the idea of people focusing on my body in these sorts of pictures because I don't I'm not really that bothered about my body or anything so I don't know why others should draw attention to it so I much prefer the more general vibes of the post because I know I already like that aspect of it.*" (Lily, 16).

3.4. First response to direct comments

'Liked' was the most common way of responding to a comment, with 313 comments receiving a 'like' (49.68 %). Of the first replies analysed, 20.95 % were expressions of gratitude ($n = 132$), and 20.16 % included an expression of love and affection ($n = 127$). Reciprocating the comment was also common (10.95 %; $n = 69$). 10.63 % of initial responses included an emoji only as the reply ($n = 67$), and 7.94 % of replies were coded as other (i.e., they did not fit into the other categories; $n = 50$). Some comments received no written response (n = 170; 26.98 %), but around 50 % of these had been 'liked' ($n = 87$; 13.81 %). Less common responses included explicit denial of the direct comment (2.38 %; $n = 15$). No responses were coded as empathy or probing.

3.4.1. Theme 3: how to respond to a comment? Reciprocate instead of accepting

Responses to comments on Instagram play an important role in how girls present themselves on social media. All girls who had not replied to a comment discussed "liking" the comment as a way of showing appreciation *"sometimes I'll reply but I feel a like is just enough, I don't have to go through every single one to say thanks, they know that I'm thankful through the like"* (Hannah, 17). That said, some girls discussed how offering no response to a compliment could be interpreted negatively,

since it made compliments and comments seem expected *"say I just receive a comment, but I don't reply to it sometimes I think it can seem like I'm being big headed and like I know it, but that's not what I want other people to think at all"* (Lila, 15). Thus, a 'like' plays an important role in offering some level of acknowledgement for the comment without having to write anything specific.

Although the Instagram data indicated gratitude as the most common response, girls' discussion of responding to comments showed that this response is not necessarily viewed positively. In particular, girls positioned a gratitude response negatively: *"I think if online if I had just replied to that comment saying "thanks" like I know it's not rude but to me that could come across rude because … in real life [offline world] I find it quite uncomfortable to take a compliment without being awkward"* (Mya, 18). This may reflect a societal and cultural norm wherein denial or reciprocation of a compliment is engrained within young girls, compared to simply saying 'thank you': *"so if you post a picture of yourself and then people comment like 'oh yeah, you're really pretty' it's just an automatic response to deny it like even if you think you look alright in the picture… I don't know why that's a thing, but I just feel like you should deny it"* (Holly, 15). In this way, there is an expectation among peers to reciprocate rather than accept *"I feel like when someone comments something nice you have to sort of you don't have to but it's just kind of something that's in built in us to like compliment them back"* (Mya, 18).

Reciprocation may also act as a self-presentation strategy when responding to compliments on Instagram. For example, some girls described how reciprocating a compliment is a way of avoiding negative labels (e.g., attention seeking) on social media *"accepting compliments like obviously it's something that happens but it feels a bit strange to do I feel like I have to reciprocate so I'm not looking like I'm getting attention"* (Darcie, 16). They also described how sometimes they reciprocate a compliment because they do not agree with the compliment, but also to make you look good and the commenter feel good: *"sometimes I think I do just disagree with the compliment but sometimes it's to make that person that commented feel better about themselves like oh no it's not I'm not I don't look nice you look nice or like to make them feel better about themselves and to make you look like a nice person"* (Alex, 14).

4. Discussion

This study explored the content of text-based appearance exchanges on adolescent girls' Instagram posts, as well as their interpretations of these exchanges. Collectively, our findings provide insight into the common ways in which adolescent girls may typically interact in relation to self-images on social media. Furthermore, the findings highlight the complexities of girls' interactions, which appear to be informed by broader social norms and self-presentational strategies and have implications for wellbeing when considered under the lens of objectification theory.

Our findings highlight how comments received on self-images on Instagram were more likely to be appearance-related and positive. Thus, our content analysis corroborates adolescents' self-reporting of this phenomenon in previous research (Burnell, George, et al., 2021). It is also consistent with descriptions of positive appearance commentary being a social norm for girls (Paddock & Bell, 2021). However, it may also be that adolescents curate their posts so that only positive comments remain in the comments section as part of a self-presentational strategy that makes them look good to other people by only retaining images with lots of appearance compliments (Márquez et al., 2023). Images with numerous comments may be deemed more worthy for retaining because the comments have told them they 'look good'. This does not mean that negative appearance comments do not happen, it may just be that that they occur in private channels (e.g., direct messages), where anonymity is afforded (e.g., Nesi et al., 2018; Paddock & Bell, 2021), or where bullying is already being experienced on social media (Berne et al., 2014) and so are less represented in this dataset of public-facing, highly curated Instagram posts. This is also consistent

with broader social media research which suggests a social media positivity bias wherein most users present their most favourable version of themselves online (Schreurs & Vandenbosch, 2021).

There were differences in the positive appearance-related comments made on Instagram in the present study and those reported in past research involving offline comments. Previous research exploring compliments in face-to-face interaction has found that they tend to focus on weight (e.g., you look so skinny in those jeans; Calogero et al., 2009) or on other specific appearance related attributes (e.g., your legs are so toned; Lawler & Nixon, 2011). However, in this study general appearance compliments (e.g., you are stunning) were more common than specific appearance compliments, and weight related compliments were non-existent. In the interviews, girls described the possible negative effects of giving and receiving specific appearance compliments, as they have the potential to make people question the other aspects of their appearance that have not been commented on or internalise the comment as a personal goal that they need to achieve to get the same validation in the future (Fardouly et al., 2015; Thompson et al., 1999). In this way, girls appear hyper aware of a compliment culture wherein general appearance compliments can have a positive impact on the receiver, whilst simultaneously recognising that specific appearance compliments may impact the receiver negatively by reinforcing an appearance ideal (e.g., Calogero et al., 2009).

Though participants described experiencing ambivalent feelings towards appearance compliments on Instagram, they typically respond positively to them, by showing gratitude, affection, liking a comment or even by reciprocating the compliment. Adolescents talked about how no response would be considered vain (i.e., like they were expecting good comments or that they knew they looked good). Interview data suggests that these were largely driven by self-presentational concerns, as girls described how responses reflected a desire to avoid being perceived negatively. This finding is consistent, not only with previous research on appearance commentary (e.g., Burnell, George, et al., 2021; Chua & Chang, 2016), but also with research exploring social media use more broadly, which shows users of all ages aim to present the best version of their authentic selves (Schreurs & Vandenbosch, 2021). Although gratitude and affection for a comment was most common, reciprocation of a compliment was positioned as a more appropriate response by some of the girls in the study, and gratitude was viewed as a less positive response for some girls. This is consistent with previous research examining how people receive offline compliments (Rees-Miller, 2011) and in text-message exchanges (Burnell, Kurup, et al., 2021). It may be that reciprocation offers a way of expressing gratitude for the compliment, but also a way of deflecting the compliment because of the emotional ambivalence they experience when receiving them and the social unacceptability of accepting them. This potentially reflects a gendered norm wherein femininity is characterised by women underestimating their achievements (Murnen & Byrne, 1991) and thus a need to appear modest in all situations, especially around appearance (Britton et al., 2006). Appearing too confident about appearance can have negative consequences for how people view women (Daniels, Zurbriggen, & Ward, 2020) which may explain why some of the girls in this study deflected a compliment online. Those who have greater body positivity may be more likely to express gratitude for a compliment and be less affected by self-presentational concerns due to feeling greater appreciation and acceptance surrounding their appearance (Wood-Barcalow et al., 2010).

Little research has considered the role and function of captions on social media images. In past research, adolescents have described using explicit self-deprecation to caption self-images as means of conforming to appearance ideal posting norms while appearing modest (e.g., "feel cute, might delete later"; Paddock & Bell, 2021). This finding also contrasts with offline body talk research, wherein self-disparaging remarks (e.g., saying to someone "does my bum look big in this?") are common ways of instigating fat talk (Salk & Engeln-Maddox, 2011). However, explicit self-deprecating captions were not common in the

data and instead, girls' captions mostly consisted of non-appearance related remarks, reflecting girls' expectations of receiving appearance-related feedback anyway, as described in the interviews. Indeed, research supports the notion that posting a self-image is a way of seeking reassurance, in the form of appearance compliments, from peers (Bell, 2019; Chua & Chang, 2016). The low numbers of explicit self-disparaging remarks may reflect how these are viewed negatively by peers and positioned as 'attention seeking' (Paddock & Bell, 2021), and as such may be more likely to be deleted. Thus, these findings also show the way in which the social media environment transforms the experiences of body talk, in that posting images is a form of reassurance seeking behaviour and that text-based self-deprecation is not needed (Nesi et al., 2018).

4.1. Implications

In highlighting the ways in which appearance messages (i.e., compliments) are transmitted on social media, and then interpreted by adolescent girls, the findings have important implications for objectification theory. Appearance compliments were the norm. Under the lens of objectification theory, although initially appearance compliments (generalised or specific) may make girls feel better about themselves, they may potentially lead girls to adopt an external viewers perspective of themselves and become hyper focused on how they appear to others, as was apparent in the participants' interpretation of the comments they received (e.g., Burnell, George, et al., 2021). The comments might contribute to a general sense that appearance is the most important self-attribute, particularly for girls, which may play into feminine gender roles and girls feeling a need to adhere to this by receiving compliments about their appearance (Ward & Grower, 2020). Further research is needed to explore this association in more detail to fully understand the potential consequences of viewing and engaging with appearance-related text on Instagram.

Furthermore, these findings have implications for understandings of positive body image. Tylka and Wood-Barcalow (2015) argue that positive body image is not aided by frequent appearance compliments due to this type of commentary reinforcing sociocultural pressures surrounding appearance. The findings from the present study highlight how different types of compliments may have varying roles to play in relation to positive body image and that girls are hyper aware about the potential negative impacts for body image when giving and receiving more specific appearance compliments compared to general appearance compliments. Though not discussed in interviews, other studies suggest that general appearance compliments can be a way of showing appreciation of others' appearance and varying levels of beauty (Wood-Barcalow et al., 2010) without overfocusing on a specific aspect of appearance, which in turn can promote body and appearance appreciation (Kvardova et al., 2023). This may be a positive for adolescent girls and why they prefer giving and receiving these types of compliments, especially if they are exposed to #bopo (body positive) content on social media (Taylor et al., 2023). Never receiving appearance compliments may not be conducive for body image among girls as this also reinforces that they do not meet cultural standards of beauty, but equally too many compliments may strengthen sociocultural pressures surrounding appearance. Further research is needed to understand the different types of compliments (e.g., general and specific) from a positive body image perspective, as it may be that certain levels of appearance compliments are conducive to positive body image, and this in turn may have implications for body talk interventions.

The findings also have important implications for understandings of how the online environment transforms adolescents' interactions (Nesi et al., 2018), in the context of appearance. More specifically, our findings suggest that posting a picture of the self is a way of initiating body talk, in the same way that self-disparaging remarks have been used to initiate body talk in an offline context. This suggests that Instagram design features (e.g., posting images) facilitates appearance

conversations in the form of comments and responses. In addition, the findings show how adolescent girls appropriate Instagram to reduce the permanency feature by engaging in self-curation practices such as deleting Instagram posts and comments on existing posts. This may mean that though this data does reflect adolescent girls' actual Instagram data, it may not be representative of their everyday Instagram use.

4.2. Limitations

This study adopted a novel method to explore a complex real-world interaction. Within this study, we used qualitative data (e.g., one-to-one interview data) to interpret quantitative data (e.g., content analysis of Instagram data). To our knowledge, this is one of the first studies within the field of body image and social media to combine these techniques in this way. We also used a combination of inductive and deductive coding (similar to Bell et al., 2024; Jankowski et al., 2014) that was informed by a range of perspectives (e.g., past research, perceived salience in dataset, interview data). However, in contrast to past inductive-deductive content analyses, we have incorporated youth voice into this process through the interview data. Previous research has highlighted the importance of including youth voice as it allows young people to be involved with the research process from data collection to data analysis (Kirshner et al., 2005) therefore this study makes an important contribution to the area of adolescent social media use and appearance interactions. Furthermore, within this study we have been able to capture real-life data (e.g., Instagram posts, comments, replies) and instead of solely focusing on the frequency of content or using survey methods to explore associated consequences we have had the opportunity to ask young people for their own interpretation. That said, this study could have gone further in its approach by including youth in the analysis process (Liebenberg et al., 2020).

Although the methodological design holds many strengths, a key limitation of the present study is that the sample of adolescent girls recruited may have only taken part in this study because their feeds were curated in a way to only show positive comments and so they felt happy to share this with a researcher. It may be that adolescents who receive numerous negative appearance comments did not want to volunteer to take part, therefore limiting the present study's variability in type of comments and responses. Another limitation to note is that the sample size is quite small and comprised of predominantly white adolescent girls living in England. Though some social media research has found remarkably similar patterns of use across different cultural groups of adolescents (Livingstone, 2019), it is still important for future research to explore these issues in a diverse sample as other studies have shown many cultural and ethnic differences in the manifestation of body image (Craddock, 2016). Finally, this study does not take into consideration the way in which boys engage with appearance commentary on Instagram. That said, previous research has highlighted the gendered nature of appearance commentary, with boys engaging less with appearance compliments and more with appearance-related banter (Paddock & Bell, 2021). Further research should aim to explore, in detail, the ways in which boys with appearance commentary on social media.

A final limitation is that the study focused on images shared on highly public, highly permanent and highly visual social media platforms. Thus, while this provides insight into adolescents' appearance-related interactions that occur in front of larger audiences on Instagram, findings may not be transferable to less public and permanent interactions on Instagram (e.g., stories) and beyond (e.g., TikTok, Snapchat). It may be that adolescents interact differently around images shared with smaller audiences and/or with ephemerality (e.g., Mittmann et al., 2022; Thelwall & Vis, 2017). Indeed, images tend to be shared more frequently through more private social media channels, which may also explain why the adolescents involved in this study only had a small number of Instagram posts. Therefore, it is clear that further work is needed to better understand the nuances of the spectrum of appearance-related interactions occurring on social media.

4.3. Conclusion

This study adopted a novel methodological approach to extract and capture adolescent girls' real-life Instagram data to explore the content and frequency of appearance-related messages, as well as understanding their own interpretation of these interactions. Our findings provide some insight into the prevalence of appearance-related commentary on Instagram, among some adolescent girls. General appearance compliments were the most common and girls described preferring these types of comments than specific appearance compliments. This study also found self-presentational concerns in relation to how girls respond to compliments on Instagram, as the type of response was important to how they were presenting themselves. The findings may also have important implications for objectification theory as they highlight the way in which text-based interactions, as well as images on Instagram, may be, linked with girls adopting an external viewers perspective of appearance. Further research is needed to fully understand the potential consequences of appearance-text on social media through examining the unique relationships between, posting images, receiving comments, responding to comments and body image variables.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Danielle Louise Paddock: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Jennifer Cassarly:** Writing – review & editing, Validation. **Beth Teresa Bell:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Supervision, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Conceptualization.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data availability

The data that has been used is confidential.

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