

**Exploring Relationships between Upward Comparison Tendency, Thin-ideal
Internalization, and Body-admiration on Weight-loss Dieting in College Women: A
Moderated Mediation Analysis**

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Abstract

Women are frequently presented with the western thin body ideal. Those women high in tendency to compare their appearance actively seek the comparison to the thin-ideal. Experiencing admiration for the compared other can motivate women to engage in weight-loss dieting (WLD) to imitate the thin-ideal which is a risk factor for eating pathology. It was hypothesized that women who score high on upward physical appearance comparison tendency (UPACT) experience more frequent episodes of body-admiration and following this engage in more WLD. Furthermore, that this mediation pathway will be moderated by thin-ideal internalization, such that thin-ideal internalization will increase the frequency of body-admiration and thus the tendency to engage in WLD. A sample of 237 college women, who are native German speakers, with no known history of eating pathology participated in an online questionnaire that assessed UPACT, frequency of body-admiration, thin-ideal internalization, and WLD. PROCESS model 7 was used for bootstrap analyses (Hayes, 2022) and the results showed that the moderated mediation model was not significant. However further exploration of the data revealed that body-admiration mediates the relationship of UPACT and WLD. This shows that women who engage in UPACT experience more frequent episodes of body-admiration and are more likely to engage in WLD. Interventions to possibly prevent college women from developing eating disorders should therefore target women who frequently engage in UPACT and the experience of body-admiration.

Keywords: upward physical appearance comparison tendency, body-admiration, thin-ideal internalization, weight-loss dieting, college women

Exploring Relationships between Upward Comparison Tendency, Thin-ideal Internalization, and Body-Admiration on Weight-loss Dieting in College Women: A Moderated Mediation Analysis

According to some authors, weight-loss dieting (WLD) has been shown to be one of the main risk factors for eating disorders in women such as binge eating and purging (Ackard et al., 2002; Schaumberg & Anderson, 2016; Stice & Shaw, 2018). Women have been frequently shown to be a population at risk for dieting and eating disturbances (Fitzsimmons-Craft, 2011; Goldschmidt et al., 2012; Kurth et al., 1995), and approximately 43% of college women diet with the intention to lose weight (Samman et al., 2012). This creates a high prevalence of individuals who present a risk factor for eating pathology. Therefore, it is important to identify those women who are at risk to prevent the development of eating disorders. Both research and theory suggest that such dieting is a result of an upward comparison process with a pervasive aesthetic thin-ideal (Ata et al., 2015; Stice, 2001). Indeed, research states that those women who tend to frequently compare their appearance upwards to the western ideal of thinness tend to be more frequent dieters (Ata et al., 2015; Fitzsimmons-Craft et al., 2014). Unfortunately, little research has looked at the psychological processes underpinning how upward physical appearance comparison tendency (UPACT) motivates dieting. However, contemporary social comparison theory suggests a mediating role for body-admiration following upward comparison with the thin-ideal (Buunk & Gibbons, 2000; Smith, 2000). With this in mind, the aim of the current study is to assess if women will be more motivated to engage in WLD after experiencing body-admiration for the compared other. It is proposed that women who score high on UPACT experience more frequent episodes of body-admiration and are thus more likely to engage in WLD. It is also suggested that internalization of the thin-ideal, a variable associated with frequent body comparisons and dieting in women (Ata et al., 2015; Dalley et al., 2019; J. K. Thompson &

Stice, 2001) will strengthen the mediating pathway from UPACT through frequency of body-admiration on WLD.

Humans have an innate tendency to compare themselves (Festinger, 1954) and social comparison is “how we use others to make sense of ourselves and the world” (Buunk & Gibbons, 2000, p. 487). Much research has looked at the different mechanisms underlying social comparison and two types of social comparison are frequently distinguished (O’Brien et al., 2009). Downward comparison is the experience of comparing oneself to someone who is perceived as lower than oneself and upward comparison is the experience of comparing oneself to someone who is perceived to be better off than oneself (O’Brien et al., 2009; Smith, 2000). Social comparison has been frequently linked to the experience of body dissatisfaction and dieting when women are presented with the western thin beauty ideal (Ata et al., 2015). A cross-sectional study by Fitzsimmons-Craft et al. (2014) supports these mechanisms and social comparison in college women predicted body dissatisfaction and dieting after 3 months follow-up. In western cultures, the ideal body type that is frequently presented in the media is that of the thin-ideal (Anixiadis et al., 2019). Fulfilling the standard of the thin-ideal in western society is rewarded with social acceptance, creating the perception that being thin means being beautiful and attractive (J. K. Thompson & Stice, 2001). Upward social comparison is used by women to find out what the ideal is, what their perceived distance from it is, and how they can achieve it (O’Brien et al., 2009; Smith, 2000). It is therefore thought that social comparison plays an important role in determining the impact of such ideals.

In the body image domain appearance comparison is the interpersonal variable of social comparison tendency which has been defined as “the tendency to compare one’s appearance with that of others “ (Ata et al., 2015, p. 270) and it was shown that compared to other types of comparison, physical appearance comparison is more likely to be directed upwards (Anixiadis et al., 2019; McKee et al., 2013; O’Brien et al., 2009; J. K. Thompson et

al., 1999). When the discrepancy one experiences towards the compared other and the perceived control about it is low, contrastive negative emotions result from the upward comparison (Smith, 2000). The tendency to compare oneself to someone who is perceived to be thinner and better looking was shown to be related to negative emotions, body dissatisfaction, dieting, and disordered eating (Ata et al., 2015). These results suggest that women who score high on upward physical appearance comparison tendency (UPACT) experience negative emotions after comparing themselves. Most research about UPACT focuses on negative emotions following upward physical appearance comparisons such as envy and body dissatisfaction (Onu et al., 2016). However, according to contemporary social comparison theory, positive emotions such as admiration could also have an impact on behaviour following UPACT (Buunk & Gibbons, 2000; Smith, 2000). When comparing one's physical appearance upwards and when the compared person is perceived as likeable and deserving of the ideal, then the emotion of admiration follows from the comparison (Smith, 2000). This is supported by research findings from van de Ven (2017), who stated that the emotion of admiration is frequently experienced after comparing oneself upwards. Additionally, Onu et al. (2016) proposed a conceptual model of admiration that suggests that comparing to exceeding standards results in experiencing admiration for these standards. Linking this to the body image domain, it is proposed that when a woman compares her physical appearance to a woman who is perceived to fulfil the societal standard of thinness and is seen as likeable and deserving of that body type, then body-admiration is experienced. It is therefore hypothesized that women higher in tendency to compare their physical appearance upward, will experience more frequent episodes of body-admiration for an ideal of the thin body type.

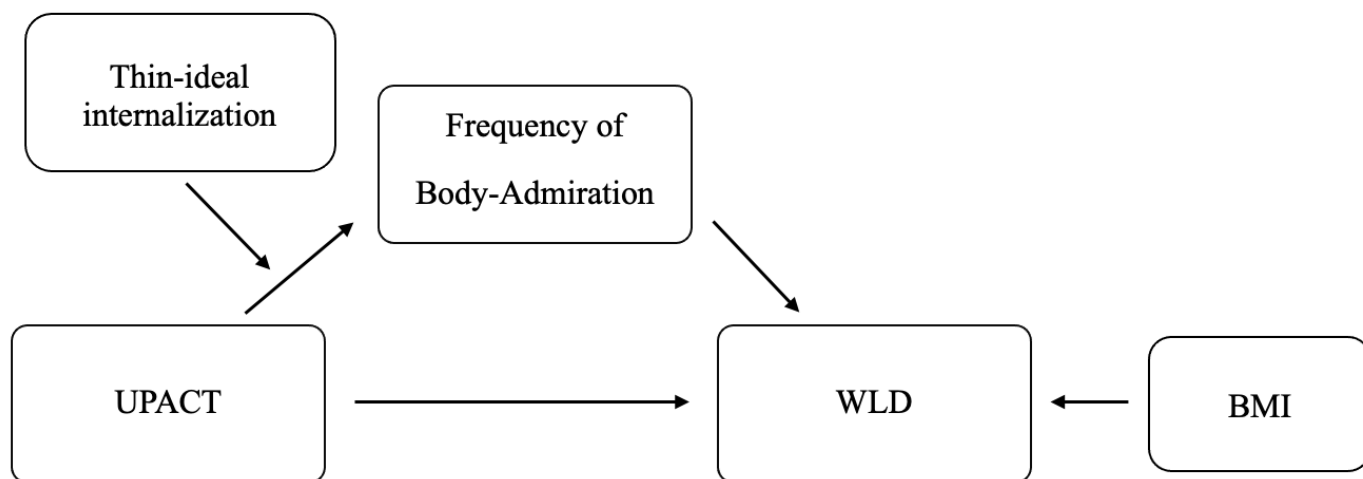
The motivational power of admiration has been supported in an article by Schindler et al. (2013), who suggested that admiration guides behaviour and acts as a reinforcer for one's

own ideals and identity. If admiration is experienced when the person of comparison is perceived as being far from oneself and does not threaten one's own self-concept, admiration then in turn elicits the reaction of wishing to imitate the admired person and acts therefore as a motivator (Onu et al., 2016). This view has been supported by Smith (2000), who reported admiration as an emotion following UPACT, which is experienced when the compared ideal is being perceived as something one can attain. When body admiration is experienced towards a body type of the thin-ideal, then the feeling of admiration elicits a motivational power to improve oneself to reach the ideal body type (van de Ven, 2017). It is suggested that admiration is experienced towards a person that fulfils the thin-body ideal because thinness is associated with positive attributes such as social acceptance, desirability, happiness, and beauty, which are seen as admirable in society (Ahern et al., 2008). Societal rewards associated with being thin and fulfilling the western body ideal strengthen the motivational power to reach the admired ideal (J. K. Thompson & Stice, 2001; van de Ven, 2017). Dieting to lose weight is thus a change in behaviour that is then used as a way to achieve the admired thin body type to receive the benefits that are associated with being thin. It is therefore proposed that those women who experience more frequent episodes of body-admiration will have greater motivation for WLD.

However, it is also predicted that this mediation pathway from UPACT through frequency of body-admiration onto WLD will be stronger for some women than others. A great body of literature suggests the influence of thin-ideal internalization on the experience of body dissatisfaction, body checking, and dieting (Ata et al., 2015; Dalley et al., 2019; Durkin & Paxton, 2002; Stice, 2001). Thin-ideal internalization has been defined by J. K. Thompson and Stice (2001) as "the extent to which an individual cognitively "buys into" socially defined ideals of attractiveness and engages in behaviors designed to produce an approximation of these ideals" (p. 181). Especially the western culture presents a body ideal

of thinness and if someone is frequently exposed to an ideal of a thin body type, the beauty ideal of being thin becomes internalized (J. K. Thompson et al., 1999; J. K. Thompson & Stice, 2001). However, little research has focused on whether thin-ideal internalization increases the experience of body-admiration. Emotion theories suggest that the more important something is to the self, in this instance internalization of the thin-ideal, the stronger the resulting emotions (Lazarus, 1991). Thus, those women who perceive the thin-ideal as relevant to themselves (i.e., internalized the ideal) are more committed to that ideal and experience stronger emotions (Smith, 2000; J. K. Thompson & Stice, 2001). It is therefore suggested that internalization of the thin-ideal increases the frequency of body-admiration women experience after engaging in UPACT and consequently, thin-ideal internalization will be included as a moderating variable in the analyses. It is predicted that the mediation pathway between UPACT and dieting will be stronger for those women who score high on thin-ideal internalization.

In summary, the current study will examine if college women who experience more frequent episodes of body-admiration after engaging in UPACT will diet more frequently with the intention to lose weight. By including a moderating variable, it is furthermore assessed whether internalization of the thin-ideal increases the frequency of body-admiration episodes and will therefore lead to more WLD (see Figure 1). These effects are expected to occur for all college women independently of body size and the actual distance to the thin-body ideal. To account for this, Body Mass Index (BMI) is included as a control variable. It is predicted that college women who score high on UPACT will experience more frequent episodes of body-admiration and will therefore be more likely to engage in WLD. It is also predicted that this mediation pathway will be stronger for women high on thin-ideal internalization.

Figure 1*Predicted moderated mediation model*

Note. UPACT: Upward Physical Appearance Comparison; WLD: Weight-Loss Dieting; BMI: Body Mass Index.

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited using convenience and snowball sampling. Initially, a total of $N = 427$ responses were collected. One hundred and eight participants were excluded from the study because they did not meet the requirements of identifying as female, being a native German speaker, studying at a university, and having no known history of an eating disorder. Specifically, 82 participants were excluded due to incomplete questionnaires, which leaves a total of $N = 237$ participants recruited for statistical analysis. Participants age ranged from 18 to 46 ($M = 24.1$, $SD = 3.6$).

Measures

To ensure the correct translation of the scales a back-translation process was used. First, all items were translated from English to German by one researcher and then translated

back by another researcher from German to English. Both researchers are native German speakers and have an English proficiency of C1.

Upward physical appearance comparison (UPACT)

To measure the tendency to upwardly compare one's physical appearance the Upward Physical Appearance Comparison Scale (UPACS) by O'Brien et al. (2009) was used. The scale consists of ten items (e.g., I tend to compare myself to people I think look better than me / Ich neige dazu, mich mit Leuten zu vergleichen, von denen ich denke, dass sie besser aussehen als ich) which each were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (*stimme überhaupt nicht zu*) to *strongly agree* (*stimme voll und ganz zu*). O'Brien et al. (2009) showed the Cronbach's alpha to be .93 for the UPACS scale. In the current study, Cronbach's alpha was .91 and McDonalds omega was .91.

Frequency of Body-admiration

Frequency of body-admiration was measured by a self-constructed Body-Admiration Scale. The scale consisted of six items which reflect the components that are thought to make up the experience of body-admiration based on contemporary research (Schindler et al., 2013; Smith, 2000). Example items were: "I have the tendency to be impressed by those women who are perfectly slim and toned" (Ich habe die Tendenz beeindruckt von Frauen zu sein, die perfekt schlank und definiert sind); "I tend to have positive feelings toward those women who are perfectly slim and toned" (Ich neige dazu, positive Gefühle gegenüber Frauen, die perfekt schlank und definiert sind zu haben.). Answers were given on a 5-point Likert scale (*strongly disagree* / *stimme überhaupt nicht zu*; to *strongly agree* / *stimme voll und ganz zu*). Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .75 and McDonalds Omega was .78.

Thin-ideal internalization

To measure thin-ideal internalization a self-translated and back-translated version of the five-item Thin/Low Body Fat subscale of the Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire-4 (SATAQ-4) was used (Schaefer et al., 2015). Responses were scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree (stimme überhaupt nicht zu)* to *strongly agree (stimme voll und ganz zu)* (e.g., I think a lot about looking thin / Ich denke viel darüber nach dünn auszusehen; I want my body to look very thin / Ich möchte dass mein Körper sehr dünn aussieht). The SATAQ-4 demonstrated a Cronbach's alpha of .87 (Schaefer et al., 2015) and in the current sample, a Cronbach's alpha of .88 and McDonalds Omega of .89 were calculated.

Weight-loss dieting (WLD)

Participants were asked to describe their eating behaviours for the past 6 months on the nine item Dieting Intent Scale developed by Stice (1998) (e.g., I hold back at meals in an attempt to prevent weight gain / Ich halte mich bei Mahlzeiten zurück, um einer Gewichtszunahme vorzubeugen; I eat diet foods in effort to control my weight / Ich esse Diät-Lebensmittel, in dem Bestreben mein Gewicht zu kontrollieren). The answer options ranged on a 5-point Likert scale from *never (nie)* to *always (immer)*. The scales showed an internal reliability of $\alpha = .94$ and a temporal reliability after one month of $\alpha = .92$ (Stice, 1998). In the current study, Cronbach's alpha of .91 and McDonalds Omega of .91 were calculated.

Body Mass Index (BMI)

Based on the self-reported height and weight, BMI for each participant was calculated which ranged from 15.4 to 42.7 ($M = 22.7$, $SD = 3.9$). It has been shown that self-reported information about height and weight are good predictors of actual body size and therefore it is

assumed that accurate information about BMI of participants were obtained (Bowman & DeLucia, 1992; Craig & Adams, 2009).

Procedure

The study was conducted by psychology bachelor students as part of a bachelor thesis project at the University of Groningen. Ethical approval was given by the faculty ethics committee. The survey was constructed in German. A sample of 6 participants were asked to take part in a pilot study to rule out misunderstanding of the items. A link and QR code were then distributed through various social media channels (e.g., WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook). At the same time, flyers with the link and QR code were distributed to female students by the researchers at the campus of the University of Groningen. Responses were obtained over a period of 3 weeks. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. All participants were provided information about the survey and agreed to an informed consent at the beginning of the questionnaire. After answering screening questions about history of eating disorder, gender identity, native language, and studying at a university, participants provided information about age, height, and weight and continued to fill out the questionnaire. If participants did not match the sample criteria, they were forwarded to the end of the questionnaire and presented with a list of 10 steps to a positive body image (*10 Steps to Positive Body Image*, 2017). Participants who met the criteria then proceeded to fill out the questionnaire and they were also provided with the 10 steps to a positive body image at the end of the survey. See Appendix A for the complete questionnaire in German.

Statistical analysis

For the statistical analysis of the moderated mediation model PROCESS macro for SPSS (version 26) was utilized which uses bootstrapping method according to Hayes (2022). First, model 4 was applied which analysed the indirect effect, following model 1 to examine

the moderation effect. The overall predicted moderated mediation model was then analysed using model 7 according to Hayes (2022). To assess statistical significance 5000 bootstrap samples with 95% confidence intervals (CI) were used. UPACT was included as the independent variable, WLD was the dependent variable, frequency of body-admiration was the mediator, thin-ideal internalization was used as a moderator and as a covariate, BMI was included.

Results

Preliminary analysis

A casewise diagnostic ($> \pm 3 SD$) was carried out and one outlier was identified. The Cooks distance of $D_i = 0.035$ was below 1 and therefore the outlier was shown to not be influential and was not removed from the dataset (Cook & Weisberg, 1982). Thus, the final dataset for statistical analysis included $N = 237$ participants. An assumption check was carried out and a residual plot was constructed which showed no serious violations of homoscedasticity and linearity (see Appendix B: Figure B1). The Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.83 indicated no correlation between the residuals and thus there was no violation of independence of errors (Schreiber-Gregory & Bader, 2018) (see Appendix B: Table B1). In the statistical analysis, heteroscedasticity was controlled for by including a Huber-White assumption check which included a heteroscedasticity consistent standard error in the analysis. To test for the assumption of multicollinearity, the variance inflation factors (VIF) were assessed which showed no violation of multicollinearity (C. G. Thompson et al., 2017) (see Appendix B: Table B2). Since bootstrapping method was shown to be robust for assumptions of normality no further assessment was done (Wright et al., 2011). Descriptive statistics and correlations between the variables can be seen below in Table 1.

Table 1*Pearson Correlations, Means and Standard deviations*

	1	2	3	4	5
1. UPACT	-				
2. WLD	.49**	-			
3. Admiration	.48**	.36**	-		
4. Thin-ideal	.62**	.65**	.49**	-	
5. BMI	.08	.27**	.02	.06	-
Mean	35.9	18.6	17.3	14.9	22.7
<i>SD</i>	7.9	7.5	3.7	5.1	3.9

Note. UPACT: Upward Physical Appearance Comparison Tendency; WLD: Weight-Loss Dieting; BMI: Body Mass Index; SD: Standard Deviation.

** $p < .01$.

Moderated Mediation Analysis

A moderated mediation was carried out using model 7 according to Hayes (2022). The model was shown not to be significant because the interaction effect of UPACT on thin-ideal

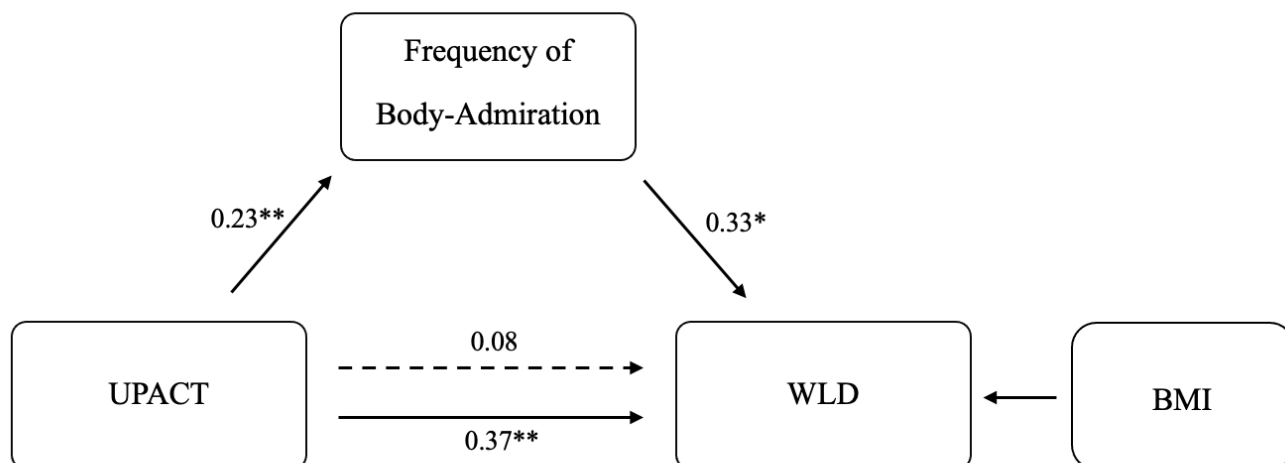
internalization and therefore the moderated mediation was not significant ($B = -0.001$, $SE = 0.004$, 95% $CI [-0.01, 0.01]$, $p = .75$). Thin-ideal internalization did not moderate the mediation pathway from the relationship of UPACT, through body-admiration onto WLD. The hypothesis that thin-ideal internalization will increase the frequency of body-admiration episodes in individuals who engage in UPACT and in return lead to more WLD is therefore rejected. However, the correlations analysis showed significant correlations of the variables which proposes that thin-ideal internalization and UPACT may independently affect WLD through body-admiration. Such being the case, two mediation pathways according to Hayes (2022) model 4 were examined.

Mediation Analyses

First, it was assessed whether UPACT has an indirect effect on WLD through frequency of body-admiration. The model was shown to be significant ($F(3,233) = 43.94$, $p < .001$) and UPACT predicted 31.26% of the variance of WLD. The effects for UPACT on body-admiration ($B = 0.23$, $SE = 0.03$, 95% $CI [0.18, 0.28]$, $p < .001$), body-admiration on WLD ($B = 0.33$, $SE = 0.13$, 95% $CI [0.08, 0.58]$, $p < .01$), and UPACT on WLD ($B = 0.37$, $SE = 0.06$, 95% $CI [0.25, 0.49]$) were shown to be significant. The indirect effect of UPACT on WLD through the mediating effect of body-admiration was also significant ($B = 0.08$, $SE = 0.03$, 95% $CI [0.02, 0.13]$). See Figure 2 for the mediation analysis of UPACT on WLD with frequency of body-admiration as the mediating variable. All effects occurred while controlling for BMI.

Figure 2

Mediation model of the relationship of UPACT and WLD with body-admiration as the mediating variable



Note. Coefficients of the interactions are presented.

UPACT: Upward Physical Appearance Comparison; WLD: Weight-Loss Dieting; BMI: Body Mass Index.

The indirect effect is displayed by the dashed line.

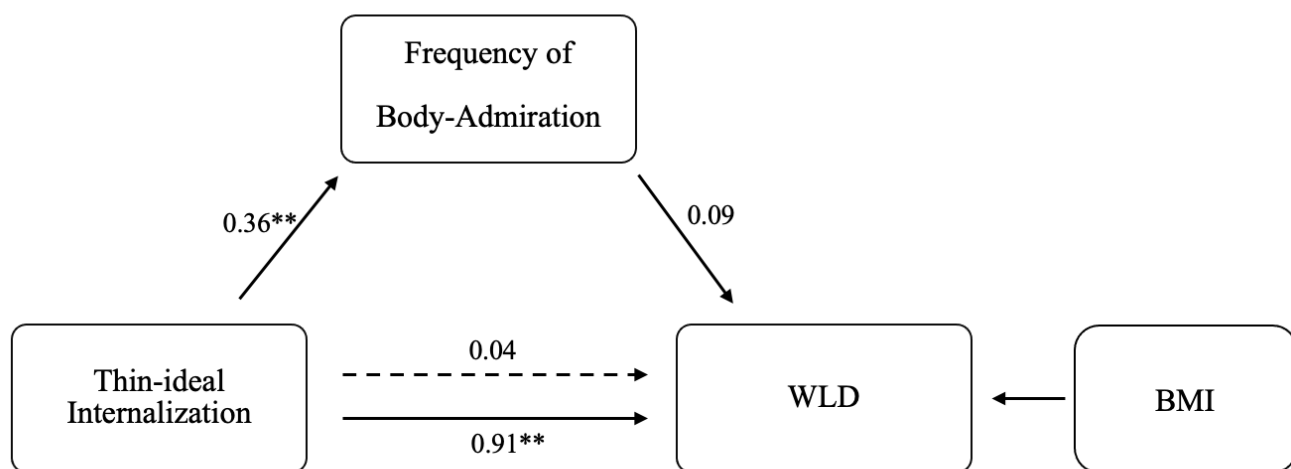
* $p < .01$. ** $p < .001$.

Secondly, a mediation analysis of the indirect effect of thin-ideal internalization on WLD with frequency of body-admiration as a mediator was examined. The overall model was significant ($F(3,233) = 92.55, p < .001$). Thin-ideal internalization accounted for 48.23% of the variance in WLD. Both the effect of thin-ideal internalization on body-admiration ($B = 0.36, SE = 0.04, 95\% CI [0.28, 0.45], p < .001$) and the direct effect of thin-ideal internalization on WLD ($B = 0.91, SE = 0.08, 95\% CI [0.76, 1.07], p < .001$) were significant. The direct effect of body-admiration on WLD was shown not to be significant ($B = 0.09, SE = 0.11, 95\% CI [-0.10, 0.29], p = .33$) as was the indirect effect of thin-ideal internalization

and WLD ($B = 0.04$, $SE = 0.04$, 95% $CI [-0.04, 0.11]$) because the 95% bootstrap CI entails 0 (Hayes, 2022). See Figure 3 for the mediation model of the mediating effect of frequency of body-admiration on the relationship of thin-ideal internalization and WLD.

Figure 3

Mediation model of the relationship of thin-ideal internalization, admiration and WLD



Note. Coefficients of the interactions are presented.

WLD: Weight-Loss Dieting; BMI: Body Mass Index.

The indirect effect is displayed by the dashed line.

** $p < .001$.

Discussion

It was predicted that college women who score high on UPACT will experience more frequent episodes of body-admiration and will thus be more likely to engage in WLD. It was also hypothesized that this mediation pathway will be stronger for those women who are high on thin-ideal internalization and that the effect occurs independently of BMI. The findings did not support the predictions and the moderated mediation model was not significant. Upon

further exploration of the data, support was found for one mediation analysis (see Figure 2). It was found that women who engage in UPACT experience more frequent episodes of body-admiration and are more likely to diet with the intention to lose weight. However, no support was found that women who score high on thin-ideal internalization will experience more frequent episodes of body-admiration and therefore be more likely to engage in WLD.

The moderated mediation model was shown to be not significant which suggests that the experience of admiration for the thin ideal might be a rather positive emotion which is not moderated by thin-ideal internalization. Clinical eating disorders are mainly characterized by negative emotions such as depression, envy, and body dissatisfaction (Fitzsimmons-Craft et al., 2014; Fox & Froom, 2009; Fox & Power, 2009). Specifically, this suggests that body admiration is a rather positive emotion that might not affect women as strongly who do not have an eating disorder. Lange et al. (2018) argue that emotions such as envy arise out of a threat to one's status and women high on thin-ideal internalization might therefore feel more threatened by the comparison because they have internalized the ideal which then elicits stronger negative emotions. Further research is therefore needed to explore the moderating effect of thin-ideal internalization on different emotions resulting from UPACT. Furthermore, assessing a clinical sample would provide a deeper insight into the emotional mechanisms that underly eating disorders. Additionally, van de Ven et al. (2011) proposed that negative emotions resulting from UPACT such as envy exert stronger motivational powers to alter one's appearance than admiration which could be seen as a reason for the non-significant moderated mediation model. This has also been supported by Baumeister et al. (2001) who stated that negative emotions elicit stronger reactions and have greater effects on behaviour than positive emotions. Future research should therefore focus on the influence of negative emotions following UPACT in a non-clinical sample to further understand the mechanisms that put some women more at risk for dieting. Furthermore, body-admiration for the thin-ideal

might exert its motivational power in different ways than dieting. When women feel body admiration after engaging in UPACT and have internalized the ideal of thinness, then they might choose different methods to reduce the discrepancy between themselves and the compared other such as exercise. This provides room for future research into the motivational effects of body-admiration.

The first mediation model of UPACT, frequency of body-admiration and WLD, that has been looked at showed significant results and was in line with the prediction. Women who engage in UPACT experience more frequent episodes of body admiration and are therefore more likely to diet with the intention to lose weight which shows that body admiration has a mediating effect on the relationship of UPACT and WLD. This is in line with previous research which states that admiration is an emotion that women frequently experience after comparing themselves to a person who is perceived to be thinner and better looking (Smith, 2000). Research by Onu et al. (2016) and by van de Ven (2017) found that admiration can motivate behaviour to improve oneself which in turn can motivate dieting to lose weight to reduce the discrepancy between the compared ideal and oneself which is in line with the current findings.

Furthermore, a mediation pathway of thin-ideal internalization, frequency of body-admiration and WLD was analysed. It was proposed that women who score high on thin-ideal internalization experience more frequent episodes of body-admiration and will then have a stronger motivation to engage in WLD. It was shown that body-admiration did not motivate dieting in those women who score high on thin-ideal internalization which suggests the influence of a different mediating variable on women who have internalized the thin-ideal. However, frequency of body-admiration did mediate the relationship of UPACT and WLD which suggests that thin-ideal internalization is linked to the experience of negative emotions rather than to the experience of body-admiration. This is supported by literature where thin-

ideal internalization is described as a negative factor (J. K. Thompson & Stice, 2001). Additionally, the current results show that thin-ideal internalization increased WLD which underlines the influence of thin-ideal internalization on dieting processes and therefore the importance of preventing eating disorders. Future research is needed to identify potential mediating mechanisms on the relationship of thin-ideal internalization and WLD.

With regards to the significant findings, it is important to state that the results occurred over and above body size which was operationalized through controlling for BMI of the participants. Body-admiration was shown to mediate the relationship of UPACT and WLD and these results were found for all women, independently of their body size and thus despite their distance to the western thin body ideal. This highlights the importance of the current study. It was shown that women independent of body size who engage in UPACT experience more frequent episodes of body-admiration and are in turn more likely to engage in WLD.

The current study provides therefore additional support that college women are a population at risk for dieting and eating disorders. Future research should also focus on women who experience negative emotions resulting from UPACT. It has been proposed that envy may be a strong mediator because women who compare themselves see the target as a rival which in turn elicits stronger motivational powers than admiration to engage in dieting to close the discrepancy between the self and the ideal (van de Ven et al., 2011). Thus, women who frequently compare themselves upwards to a thin-ideal and experience different emotions towards the target represent a population at risk for dieting with the intention to lose weight and subsequently eating pathologies.

However, limitations of the current study should be taken into consideration. First, the study design was a cross-sectional design where causation cannot be established. Even though the different variables are related no causal link should be made. Future research could make

use of an experimental design in which the emotion of body-admiration is induced to assess whether stronger experiences of admiration after UPACT increase WLD in those women who score high on thin-ideal internalization. Secondly, the limitation of the generalizability of the findings should be acknowledged. A sample of college women in a western society was assessed in the current study which does not provide information about other groups within a population or different ethnic groups. Future research could look at whether the same results also occur in a community sample or in different cultures. Finally, the conceptualization of the experience of body-admiration can be seen as a limitation and replication of the measurements would be required to ensure validation.

The results are in line with past research that shows that college women are a population at risk for dieting and the development of eating disorders (Goldschmidt et al., 2012; Kurth et al., 1995; Samman et al., 2012). It is suggested that those women who compare themselves more frequently upward have a higher risk to engage in WLD after experiencing more frequent episodes of body admiration. Therefore, interventions should target the tendency to compare one's physical appearance upward in college women. Media literacy training has been shown to act as a protective factor through challenging thoughts of reality of the thin bodies portrayed in the media (Rodgers et al., 2019). Furthermore, buffering effects of body diversity images have been proposed which suggests that increasing the portrayal of diverse bodies instead of the thin-ideal could reduce the risk of dieting to lose weight in women (Ogden et al., 2020).

In sum, the current study looked at a moderated mediation model and it was predicted that women who engage in UPACT experience more frequent episodes of body admiration and are therefore more likely to engage in WLD. This mediation pathway was hypothesized to be stronger for those women who score high on thin-ideal internalization. Results showed that the moderated mediation model was not significant. However, support was found for the

mediating effect of body admiration on the relationship of UPACT and WLD, that the frequency of body admiration increases the motivation to diet in women who engage in UPACT. These findings add to the existing literature because they provide more insight into the mechanisms that put some women more at risk to diet with the intention to lose weight. Finally, admiration may be a rather positive experience and might exert its motivational effect through different mechanisms than dieting, and it is therefore important to also look at negative emotions in future research. The findings show again the importance to challenge body images in the media and the dangerous effects western beauty standards can have on women of any body size and so it is important to remember that the thin ideal is indeed unrealistic.

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Appendix A

Upward physical appearance comparison tendency

Ich vergleiche mich eher mit Anderen, die besser aussehen als ich, als mit denen, die es nicht tun.

- stimme überhaupt nicht zu
- stimme nicht zu
- weder noch
- stimme zu
- stimme voll and ganz zu

Ich neige dazu, meine eigene körperliche Attraktivität mit der von Models in Zeitschriften zu vergleichen.

- stimme überhaupt nicht zu
- stimme nicht zu
- weder noch
- stimme zu
- stimme voll and ganz zu

Ich ertappe mich dabei, wie ich darüber nachdenke, ob mein eigenes Aussehen mit dem von Models und Filmstars vergleichbar ist.

- stimme überhaupt nicht zu
- stimme nicht zu
- weder noch
- stimme zu
- stimme voll and ganz zu

Am Strand oder bei Sportaktivitäten (z.B., Sport, Fitnessstudio etc...) frage ich mich, ob mein Körper so attraktiv ist wie die der Leute, die ich dort mit sehr attraktiven Körpern sehe.

- stimme überhaupt nicht zu
- stimme nicht zu
- weder noch
- stimme zu
- stimme voll and ganz zu

Ich neige dazu, mich mit Leuten zu vergleichen, von denen ich denke, dass sie besser aussehen als ich

- stimme überhaupt nicht zu
- stimme nicht zu
- weder noch
- stimme zu
- stimme voll and ganz zu

Wenn ich eine Person mit einem tollen Körper sehe, neige ich dazu, mich zu fragen, wie ich mit ihr mithalten soll.

- stimme überhaupt nicht zu
- stimme nicht zu
- weder noch
- stimme zu
- stimme voll and ganz zu

Wenn ich gutaussehende Leute sehe, frage ich mich, wie ich im Vergleich wirke.

- stimme überhaupt nicht zu
- stimme nicht zu
- weder noch
- stimme zu
- stimme voll and ganz zu

Auf Partys oder anderen Veranstaltungen vergleiche ich meine äußerliche Erscheinung mit dem Äußeren von sehr attraktiven Leuten

- stimme überhaupt nicht zu
- stimme nicht zu
- weder noch
- stimme zu
- stimme voll and ganz zu

Ich ertappe mich dabei, wie ich mein Aussehen mit Leuten, die besser als ich aussehen, vergleiche

- stimme überhaupt nicht zu
- stimme nicht zu
- weder noch
- stimme zu
- stimme voll and ganz zu
- Ich vergleiche meinen Körper mit Leuten, die einen besseren Körper als ich haben.
- stimme überhaupt nicht zu
- stimme nicht zu
- weder noch
- stimme zu
- stimme voll and ganz zu

Frequency of body-admiration

Ich habe die Tendenz beeindruckt von Frauen zu sein, die perfekt schlank und definiert sind.

- stimme überhaupt nicht zu
- stimme nicht zu
- weder noch

stimme zu

stimme voll und ganz zu

Ich neige dazu, positive Gefühle gegenüber Frauen, die perfekt schlank und definiert sind zu haben.

stimme überhaupt nicht zu

stimme nicht zu

weder noch

stimme zu

stimme voll und ganz zu

Ich bin oft respektvoll gegenüber Frauen, die perfekt schlank und definiert sind.

stimme überhaupt nicht zu

stimme nicht zu

weder noch

stimme zu

stimme voll und ganz zu

Ich neige dazu, zu denken, dass ein perfekt schlanker und definiert Körper eine große Errungenschaft ist.

stimme überhaupt nicht zu

stimme nicht zu

weder noch

stimme zu

stimme voll und ganz zu

Ich habe die Tendenz, Frauen zu bewundern, die perfekt schlank und definiert sind.

stimme überhaupt nicht zu

stimme nicht zu

weder noch

stimme zu

stimme voll und ganz zu

Thin-ideal internalization

Ich denke viel darüber nach dünn auszusehen.

stimme überhaupt nicht zu

stimme nicht zu

weder noch

stimme zu

stimme voll und ganz zu

Ich möchte, dass mein Körper so aussieht, als ob er wenig Fett hat.

- stimme überhaupt nicht zu
- stimme nicht zu
- weder noch
- stimme zu
- stimme voll und ganz zu

Ich möchte, dass mein Körper sehr dünn aussieht.

- stimme überhaupt nicht zu
- stimme nicht zu
- weder noch
- stimme zu
- stimme voll und ganz zu

Ich denke viel darüber nach sehr wenig Körperfett zu haben.

- stimme überhaupt nicht zu
- stimme nicht zu
- weder noch
- stimme zu
- stimme voll und ganz zu

Ich möchte, dass mein Körper sehr schlank aussieht.

- stimme überhaupt nicht zu
- stimme nicht zu
- weder noch
- stimme zu
- stimme voll und ganz zu

Weight-loss dieting

Manchmal vermeide ich es zu essen, in einem Versuch mein Gewicht zu kontrollieren

- nie
- selten
- manchmal
- oft
- immer

Ich überspringe/versäume Mahlzeiten, in einem Versuch mein Gewicht zu kontrollieren

- nie
- selten
- manchmal
- oft
- immer

Ich esse Diät-Lebensmittel, in dem Bestreben mein Gewicht zu kontrollieren.

- nie
- selten
- manchmal
- oft
- immer

Ich zähle Kalorien, um einer Gewichtszunahme vorzubeugen

- nie
- selten
- manchmal
- oft
- immer

Ich esse kalorienarme Lebensmittel, in dem Bestreben eine Gewichtszunahme zu vermeiden.

- nie
- selten
- manchmal
- oft
- immer

Manchmal esse ich nur eine oder zwei Mahlzeiten pro Tag, um zu versuchen mein Gewicht zu begrenzen

- nie
- selten
- manchmal
- oft
- immer

Ich halte mich bei Mahlzeiten zurück, um einer Gewichtszunahme vorzubeugen

- nie
- selten
- manchmal
- oft
- immer

Ich nehme mir kleine Portionen, in dem Bestreben mein Gewicht zu kontrollieren.

- nie
- selten
- manchmal
- oft
- immer

Ich begrenze die Menge an Nahrung, die ich esse, in einem Versuch mein Gewicht zu kontrollieren

- nie
- selten
- manchmal
- oft
- immer

10 steps to a positive body image

1) Schätzen Sie, was ihr Körper alles tun kann. Jeden Tag bringt ihr Körper Sie ihren Träumen näher. Feiern Sie all die tollen Dinge, die ihr Körper für sie tut – laufen, tanzen, atmen, lachen, träumen, etc.

2) Erstellen Sie eine Top-10 Liste der Dinge, die Sie über sich selbst mögen – Dinge, die nicht darauf bezogen sind, wie viel Sie wiegen oder wie Sie aussehen. Lesen Sie diese Liste oft. Ergänzen Sie die Liste, wenn ihnen mehr Dinge einfallen, die Sie über sich mögen.

3) Erinnern Sie sich daran, dass wahre Schönheit nicht nur aus dem Äußeren besteht. Wenn Sie sich mit sich selbst und dem, was Sie sind, wohlfühlen, tragen Sie sich mit einem Gefühl von Selbstbewusstsein, Selbstakzeptanz und Offenheit, das Sie schön macht, unabhängig davon, ob Sie körperlich wie ein Supermodel aussehen.

4) Betrachten Sie sich als ganze Person. Wenn Sie sich im Spiegel oder in Gedanken sehen, konzentrieren Sie sich nicht auf bestimmte Körperteile. sehen Sie sich so, wie Sie von anderen gesehen werden wollen - als ganze Person.

5) Umgeben Sie sich mit positiven Menschen. Es ist einfacher, sich mit sich selbst und seinem Körper wohl zu fühlen, wenn Sie sich mit anderen umgeben, die Sie unterstützen und die erkennen, wie wichtig es ist, sich selbst so zu mögen, wie Sie von Natur aus sind.

6) Schalten Sie die Stimmen in Ihrem Kopf ab, die Ihnen sagen, dass Ihr Körper nicht in Ordnung ist oder dass Sie ein schlechter Mensch sind. Sie können diese negativen Gedanken mit positiven überwältigen. Wenn Sie das nächste Mal anfangen, sich selbst zu kritisieren, bauen Sie sich mit ein paar schnellen Bestätigungen wieder auf, die für Sie funktionieren.

7) Tragen Sie Kleidung, die bequem ist und in der Sie sich wohlfühlen. Arbeiten Sie mit Ihrem Körper, nicht gegen ihn.

8) Werden Sie zu einem kritischen Betrachter von sozialen und medialen Botschaften. Achten Sie auf Bilder, Slogans oder Einstellungen, die Ihnen ein schlechtes Gefühl in Bezug auf sich selbst oder Ihren Körper geben. Protestieren Sie gegen diese Botschaften: Schreiben Sie einen Brief an den Werbetreibenden oder antworten Sie auf das Bild oder die Botschaft.

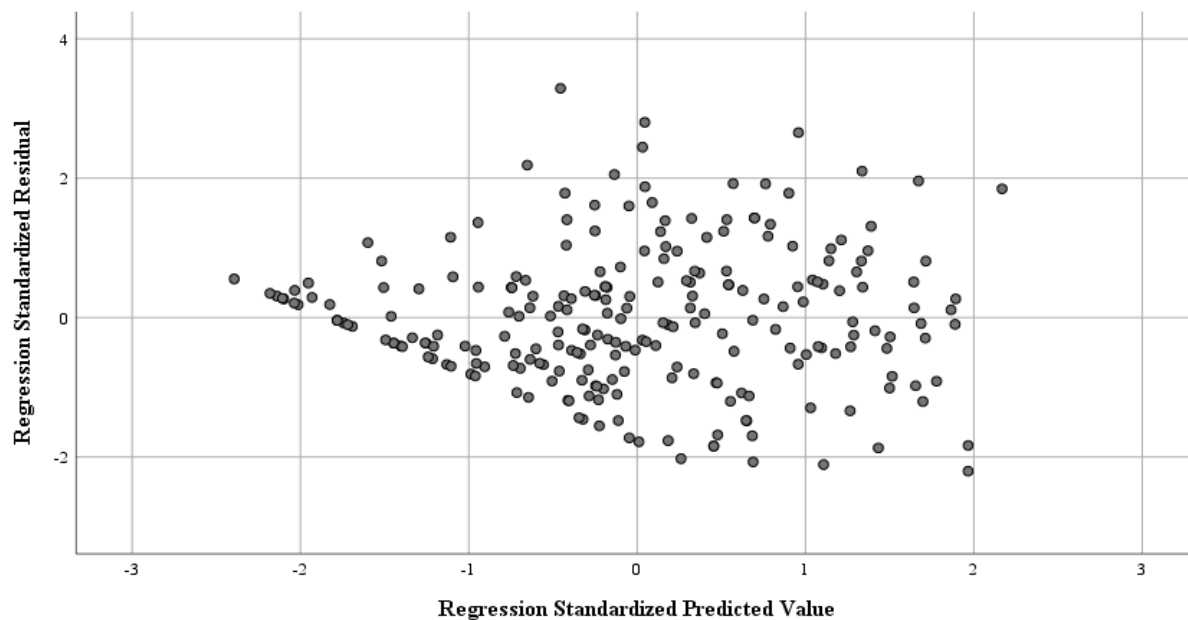
9) Tun Sie etwas Schönes für sich - etwas, das Ihrem Körper zeigt, dass Sie ihn zu schätzen wissen. Nehmen Sie ein Schaumbad, nehmen Sie sich Zeit für ein Nickerchen, suchen Sie sich einen ruhigen Platz im Freien, um zu entspannen.

10) Nutzen Sie die Zeit und Energie, die Sie vielleicht damit verbracht haben, sich über Essen, Kalorien und Ihr Gewicht Gedanken zu machen, um etwas zu tun, um anderen zu helfen. Manchmal kann das Eingehen auf andere Menschen dazu beitragen, dass Sie sich selbst besser fühlen und eine positive Veränderung in unserer Welt bewirken.

Appendix B

Figure B1

Residual plot of standardized residuals and standardized predicted values



Note. Scatterplot to test for assumption of homoscedasticity and linearity.

Dependent variable: Weight-Loss Dieting.

Table B1*Durbin-Watson test*

Model ^{1,2}	R	R ²	Durbin-Watson
1	0.7	0.49	1.83

Note. Output of regression analysis including Durbin-Watson test for assumption of independence of errors.

¹Predictors: Upward physical appearance comparison, frequency of body admiration, thin-ideal internalization, body mass index.

²Dependent variable: Weight-loss dieting.

Table B2*VIF of predictor variables*

Model	VIF
UPACT	1.74
Admiration	1.42
Thin-ideal	1.76
BMI	1

Note. Collinearity statistics to test for multicollinearity.

Dependent variable: Weight-loss dieting.

VIF: Variance Inflation Factor; UPACT: Upward Physical Appearance Comparison

Tendency; BMI: Body Mass Index.