

**“I feel like my body is me. I am my body”: Women, Healthy Lifestyles, and Instagram.**

Alice Dobie

“It definitely puts the pressure on me to maintain. There is a layer of pressure to keep my body somewhat intact so that I can post images of it because that is essentially is what my platform is.”

“The media have started to embrace more cultures which, in turn, embraces different body types. The problem that is now, it has gone the other way. Kim Kardashian is a different body type to a Victoria Secret model but she's still an extreme body type that people aspire to be like.”

“I feel like my body is me. I am my body.”

“There's a lot more of "love yourself" culture which is interesting, and I think we should be all self-accepting. I don't really know... when it is easier to love yourself when you have that body that is accepted by society.”

“Weirdly enough, I think it is just because people are inherently nosy so it's interesting to look at other people in such a quite invasive way. It is like reality TV.”

The ‘tyranny of slenderness’ (Bordo 1947: 185) began as an attempt to achieve control of their bodies. With this, there was the emergence of practices such as dieting and exercise whereby women were concerned with only physical changes and were driven to fit an idealised body image (Bordo 1947: 185). As the female body is seen as uncontrollable, to actually achieve the slender body is attributed to inner control of desires (Bordo 1947: 201). As a result, body weight becomes the scale of moral judgement where practices of dieting and exercise are used to work upon the body in a desperate attempt to conform to this ideal (Bordo 1947: 202).

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Biopower operates on the subjects' bodies through the daily self-regulation of practices such as hygiene (Foucault 1981: 141). Through such practices, individuals subjugate themselves to this system of control. Dieting and exercise can be argued to be examples of self-regulating practices, particularly in the noticeable physical way these practices enact biopower as they literally operate on the body.

However, the change in discourse surrounding diet and exercise, that has been exemplified by the growth of social media and fitness related social media accounts, has enabled individuals to gain a sense of autonomy and achievement through these practices. What was once a struggle to regulate the body and subsequently display a controlled mental disposition, has now become an expression of individuality, independence and pleasure whereby diversity is celebrated and concern for health has largely overtaken aesthetics.

As such, while separate understandings of the body and the self are helpful, such an approach ignores the way in which bodies are not considered alien objects by ourselves but rather as a key aspect of the individualised self (Csordas 1990). The connection informants feel between their body and self through practices of dieting and exercise is illuminating in this regard, as is the relationship they have with their online account.

For social media influencers, their social media accounts are an extended version of themselves and while they may create a distinction between the two, it is never in terms of authentic and inauthentic as if one is authoritative over the other.