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## **Tripartite Influence Model of Body Image and Disordered Eating among Female Athletes: Testing an Expanded Model**

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## Introduction

- Athletes are a group at risk of developing an ED, in particular elite and sub-elite athletes, and those in lean and aesthetic sports.<sup>1,2</sup>
- Risk factors for ED, including sociocultural pressures, can be understood through the Tripartite Influence Model of Body Image and Disordered Eating.<sup>3</sup>
- Three core sources of pressure (media, family and peers) are thought to contribute to the development of eating disturbances through the mediating roles of social comparisons and internalization of body/beauty ideals.<sup>4</sup>
- The Tripartite Influence Model has historically not included sources of pressure that may be most relevant to athletes, such as teammates and coaches.
- Aim: Study an expanded Tripartite Model among athletes.

### Hypotheses:

- H1: Pressures from media, peers, and family would be associated with a greater internalization of the thin- and athletic ideals and greater engagement in appearance comparisons.
- H2: Greater pressure from coaches, and teammates would predict greater internalization of the thin- and athletic ideals and greater appearance comparisons.
- H3: Internalization of the thin ideal, internalization of the athletic ideal, and appearance comparisons would predict DE among athletes.

## Methods

### Participants:

- 71 self-identified female athletes
- 82.76% non-Hispanic & 17.24% Hispanic
- Mean age = 18.9 years old ( $SD = 1.54$ )
- Mean BMI = 23.8 ( $SD = 4.06$ )

### Procedure:

- Recruited from SONA subject pool, flyers, emails to local and regional athletic organizations and mass university email.
- Online collection via self-report using Qualtrics.
- Hierarchical linear regression analysis.

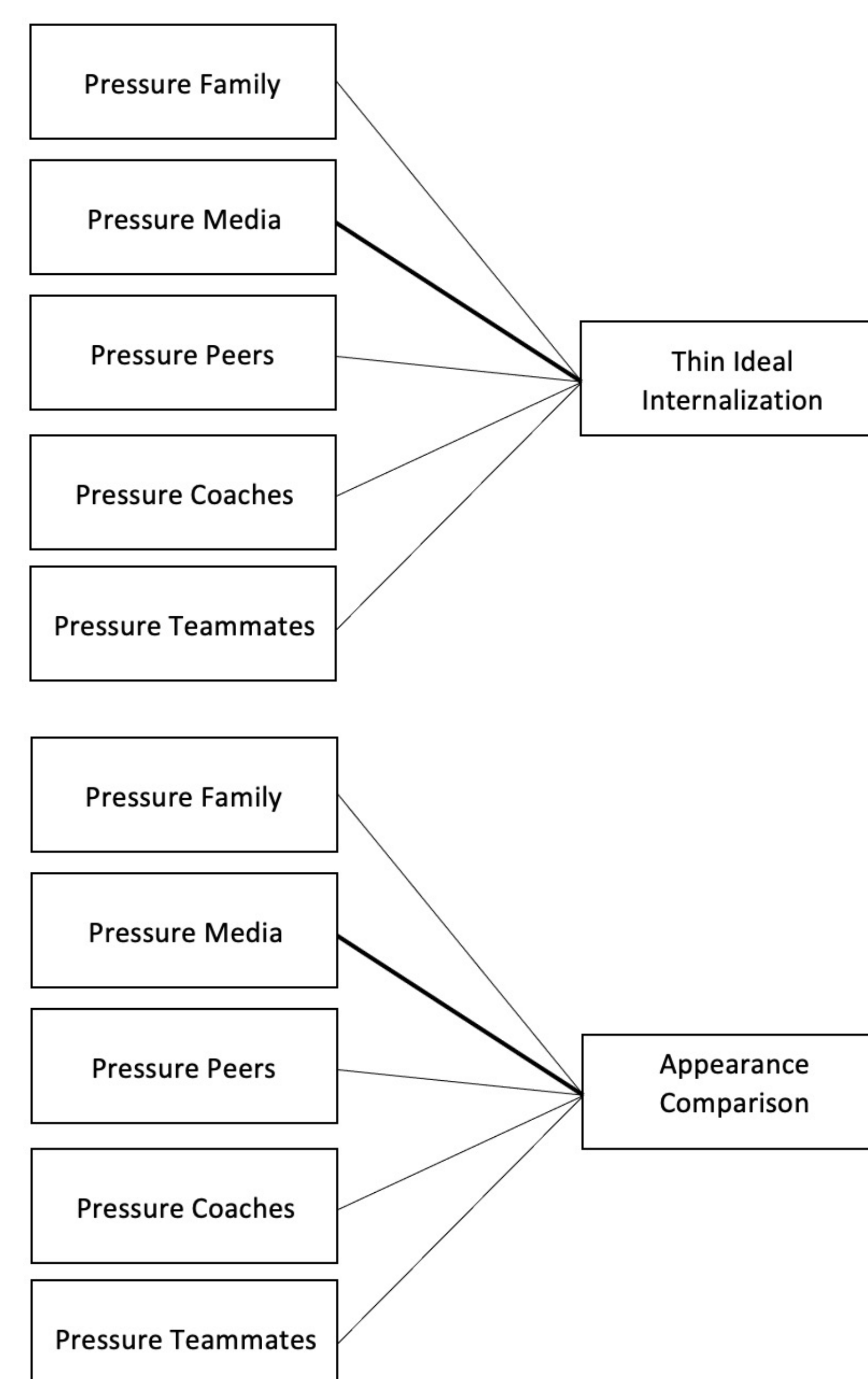
## Methods (cont'd)

### Measures:

- **Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance (SATAQ-4R)**<sup>5</sup>:
  - Validated Family, Peers, Media subscales (6 items each)
  - Newly created Coaches and Teammates subscales (6 items each)
  - Thin Ideal Internalization (15 items)
  - Athletic Ideal Internalization (10 items)
- **Physical Appearance Comparison Scale (PACS)**<sup>6</sup>:
  - 11 items
- **Eating Pathology System Inventory (EPSI)**<sup>7</sup>:
  - 5 subscales most relevant to athletes: excessive exercise, muscle building, purging, restricting & binge eating
- Greater scores = greater perceived pressure, greater thin- and athletic ideal internalization, and greater ED pathology

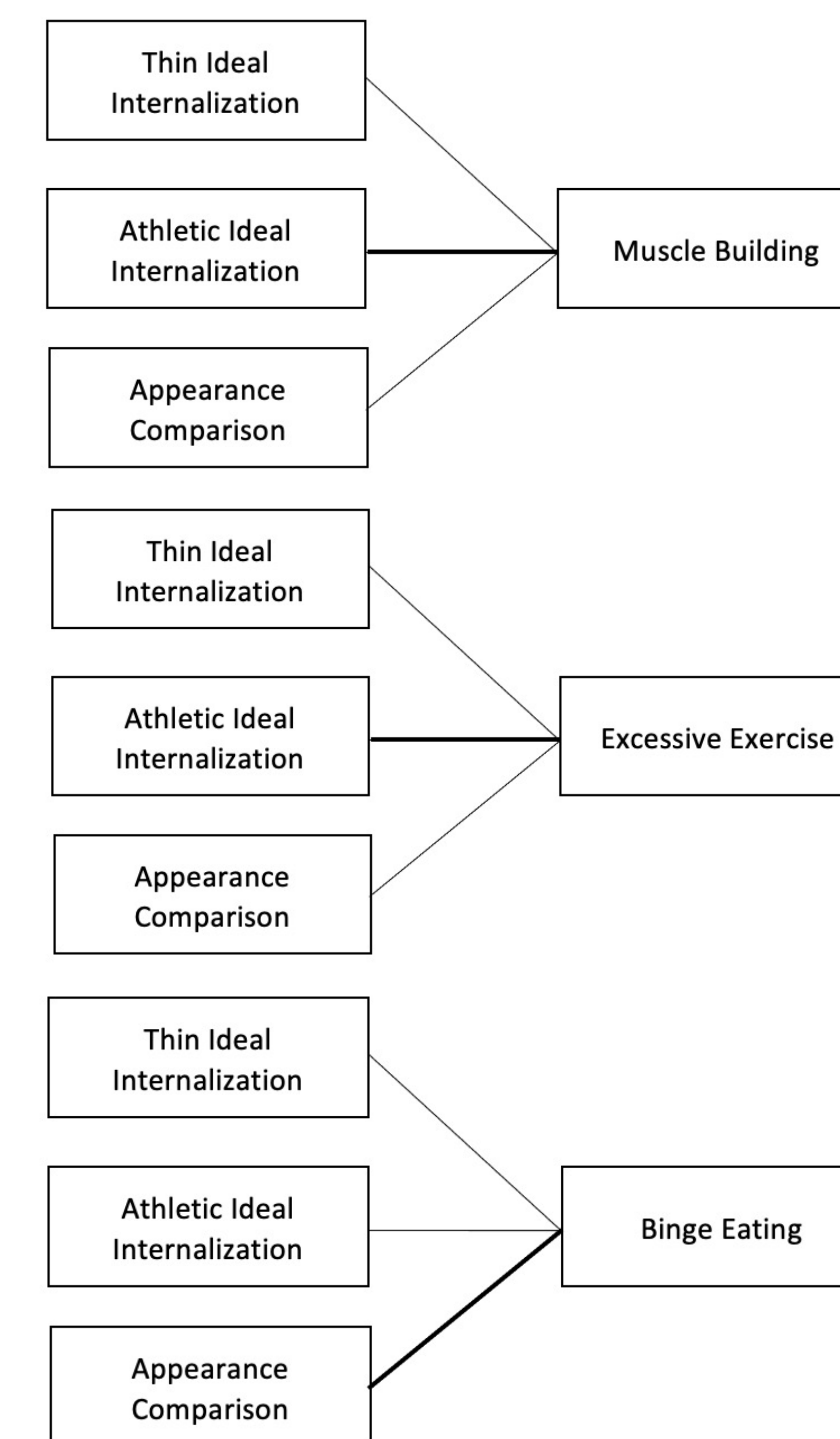
## Results

- H1: Media pressure was significantly associated with greater internalization of the thin ideal ( $B = .34, p = <.001$ ) and greater appearance comparisons ( $B = 4.19, p = <.001$ ). No other significant predictors were found.



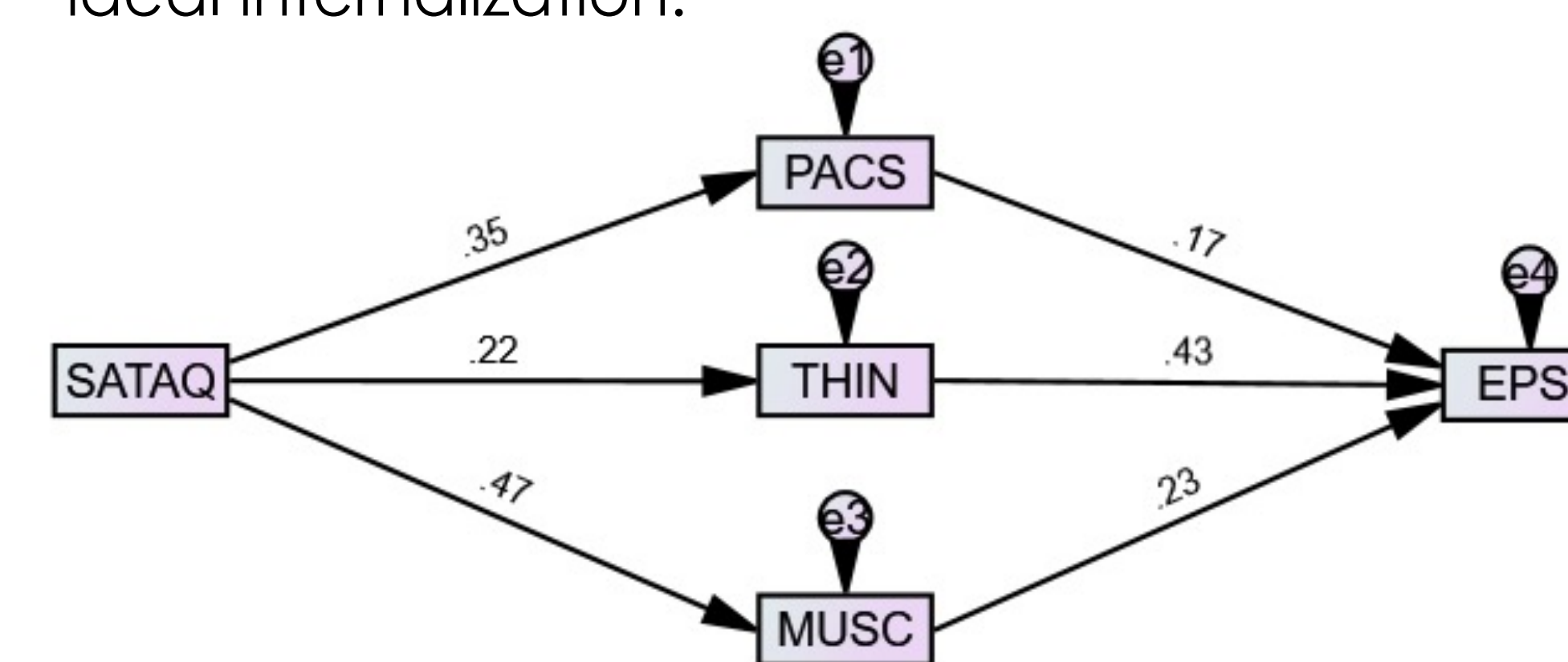
## Results (cont'd)

- H2: Neither coach or teammate pressures were significantly associated with internalization of thin- or athletic ideals or appearance comparisons.
- H3: Athletic ideal internalization was a significant predictor of engaging in excessive exercise ( $B = 3.13, p = <.001$ ) and muscle building ( $B = 2.04, p = <.001$ ). Appearance comparison was a significant predictor of engaging in binge eating ( $B = .39, p = .001$ ). No other significant predictors were found.



### Exploratory Analysis:

- Associations between sociocultural pressures and disordered eating, mediated by appearance comparisons, thin ideal internalization and athletic ideal internalization:



## Conclusions

- Partial support for the original Tripartite Influence Model was found among female athletes, suggesting that media pressure was significantly associated with thin ideal internalization and appearance comparisons.
- Similarly, athletic ideal internalization predicted engagement in muscle building behavior and excessive exercise, while appearance comparisons predicted binge eating.
- Teammate and coach pressures did not predict any known risk factors for disordered eating or disordered eating behaviors in this study.
- Qualitative work might shed light on whether and for whom these sources of pressure may be relevant.
- Limitations: 2 created subscales not validated, small sample size, cross-sectional, self-identified female athletes only, athletes not separated by lean vs non-lean, self-report measures.

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