



Positive emotions facilitated by body appreciation at any body size

Lindsay Cline, PhD Candidate

Supervisor: Dr. Kimberley Gammage

Brock University

Canadian Positive Psychology Association Conference

June 17th, 2016

Body Image

- Within exercise and health psychology
- Shift from pathology-driven approaches to reduce negative body image to helping individuals develop positive body image
- Emerged from positive psychology framework
- Positive body image is **not** merely low levels of negative body image

Positive Body Image

- Favourable opinions of the body
- Body acceptance
- Respect for the body by attending to its needs and engaging in healthy behaviours
- Protecting the body by rejecting unrealistic media portrayals of "ideal" bodies
- Body appreciation
 - Appreciation for function, health and features of body

(Avalos et al., 2005; Tylka, 2011)

Appearance-related Commentary

- Negative comments (i.e., teasing) have consistently been associated with negative body image (Fabian & Thompson, 1989; Herbozo et al., 2013)
- Positive comments (i.e., compliments) show mixed results with negative body image
 - Less body image disturbance (Fea & Brannon, 2006; Herbozo & Thompson, 2006a; McLaren et al., 2004)
 - Higher body dissatisfaction (Calogero et al., 2009; Herbozo & Thompson, 2006b)

Rationale

- Gap in literature – relationship between appearance comments and positive body image?
 - May help explain mixed findings
 - Not just about reducing negative body image
- Body appreciation - helpful for body-related information processing (Wood-Barcalow et al., 2010)
- Positive social interactions among women (e.g., appearance compliments)
 - Potential to foster positive body image emotions



Purpose

- ▶ To investigate whether body appreciation could mediate the relationship between positive appearance-related commentary and the emotional effect elicited from those comments

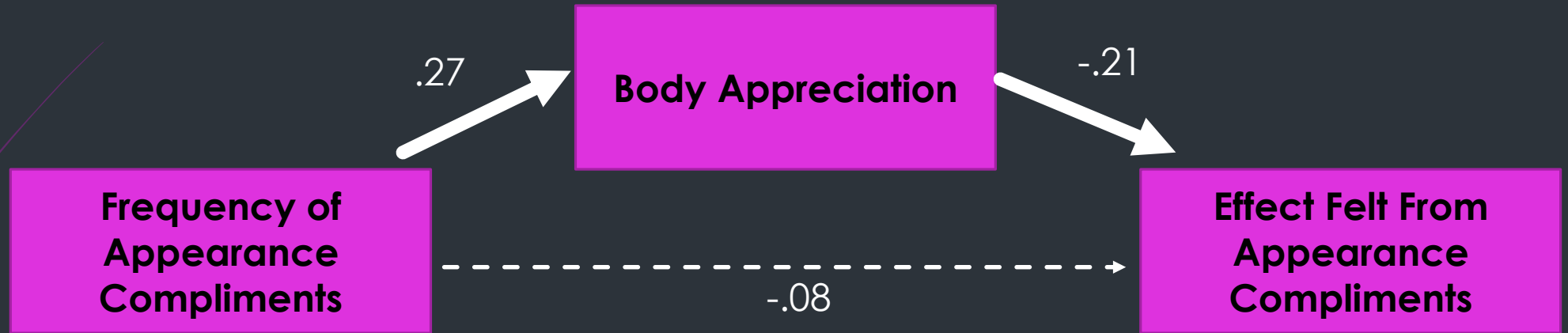
Participants

- ▶ Young adult women ($N = 104$)
 - ▶ Body mass index scores ranging from 17.80-40.80
 - ▶ Predominantly identifying as Caucasian
 - ▶ Mostly from kinesiology, physical education, and psychology degree programs

Methods & Procedure

- ▶ Participants completed a questionnaire package:
 - ▶ Demographic information
 - ▶ Body appreciation
 - ▶ Appearance-related commentary (negative & positive)
 - ▶ Frequency
 - ▶ Emotional effect felt from those comments
- ▶ Path analysis performed

Results



- Body appreciation indirectly mediated the relationship
- Positive effect felt from appearance compliments was better explained through body appreciation
 - Greater body appreciation could better predict positive effect felt from comments

Discussion

- Positive body image can provide women with a protective cognitive schema to filter body-related information (Tylka, 2011)
- Individuals who have developed a sense of self based on other strengths may have better resilience towards body-related comments (McLaren et al., 2004)



Limitations

- Mediation analysis was cross-sectional and not longitudinal
- Only examined in young adult women

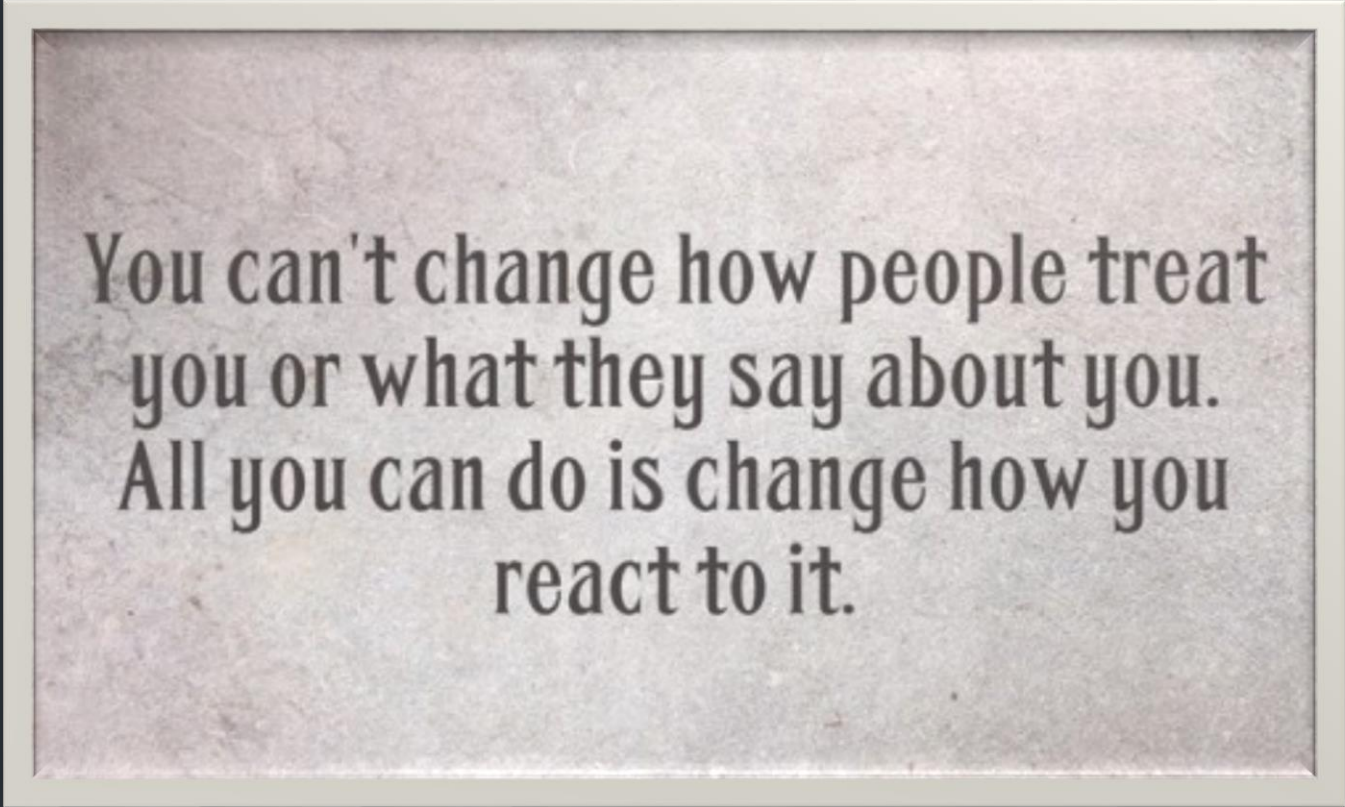


Future Directions

- Only found indirect mediation effect...
- Body image flexibility?
 - Protective factor against disordered eating (Hill et al., 2013; Sandoz et al., 2013)

Implications

- ▶ Not realistic to eliminate appearance-related commentary in society
- ▶ Research to date, women who feel more positive from compliments tend to be more dissatisfied with their body and have more trait self-objectification (Calogero et al., 2009)
 - ▶ May be relying on compliments as validation
- ▶ Promoting body appreciation is much more advantageous strategy

A rectangular piece of aged, textured paper is centered on a dark background. The paper is framed by a thin, light-colored border. The text on the paper is in a classic serif font, arranged in four lines.

You can't change how people treat
you or what they say about you.
All you can do is change how you
react to it.

A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide. It consists of several thin, curved lines in shades of purple and pink that originate from the left edge and curve upwards and to the right. At the bottom left, there is a solid purple arrow pointing to the right.

Questions?