



# The mediating role of appearance comparisons on the relationship between negative appearance commentary and binge eating symptoms



Sylvia Herbozo<sup>a,\*</sup>, Serena D. Stevens<sup>a</sup>, Idia B. Thurston<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of Psychology, Loma Linda University, 11130 Anderson Street, Loma Linda, CA 92350, United States

<sup>b</sup> Department of Psychology, University of Memphis, 310 Psychology Building, Memphis, TN 38152, United States

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 2 November 2016

Received in revised form 29 March 2017

Accepted 29 March 2017

Available online 30 March 2017

### Keywords:

Appearance commentary

Negative commentary

Appearance comparisons

Binge eating

## ABSTRACT

While the frequency of weight-based teasing during childhood/adolescence has been linked to eating disturbance, limited research has examined the impact of negative appearance commentary experienced in young adulthood. Appearance comparisons have been shown to mediate the relationship between weight-based teasing frequency in childhood/adolescence and eating disturbance; however, less is known about the impact of other forms of negative appearance commentary and binge eating symptoms. The current study examined appearance comparisons to others as a mediator of the relationship between the impact of negative appearance commentary from interpersonal sources and binge eating symptoms in college women. Three hundred and seventeen young adult women from universities in the southwest and midsouth U.S. completed measures of appearance-related commentary, physical appearance comparisons, and binge eating symptoms. Controlling for body mass index, the mediation effect of appearance comparisons was tested using the PROCESS macro for SPSS. Appearance comparisons was a significant mediator of the relationship between the impact of negative appearance comments and binge eating symptoms,  $F(3,312) = 40.256, p < 0.001, R^2 = 0.279$ . There was no direct effect of the impact of negative appearance comments on binge eating symptoms. Study findings indicate that appearance comparisons play a role in the extent to which the impact of negative appearance commentary influences binge eating symptoms. Results also suggest the need to address the impact of negative appearance commentary and appearance comparisons simultaneously in interventions for eating disorder psychopathology among college women.

© 2017 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

## 1. Introduction

The frequency of negative appearance commentary (i.e., receiving criticisms or being teased about one's weight/shape by peers, family, or others) has been significantly associated with greater dietary restraint, binge eating, and purging in children, adolescents, and adults (Menzel et al., 2010). While prior research has examined the frequency of these criticisms (Menzel et al., 2010), the impact of these criticisms (e.g., being upset/bothered by teasing) is also important to consider, especially among college women who report high rates of eating disorder psychopathology (Quick, Berg, Bucchianeri, & Byrd-Bredbenner, 2014). Research has shown that the impact of weight-based teasing during childhood/adolescence is more strongly linked to poor body image than the frequency of its occurrence in college women (Thompson & Psaltis, 1988). Yet, less attention has been given to the impact of negative appearance commentary during young adulthood.

Young adults receive negative appearance commentary from family, significant others, and interpersonal sources in forms other than teasing, such as hurtful weight/shape comments (Eisenberg, Berge, Fulkerson, & Neumark-Sztainer, 2011; Herbozo & Thompson, 2006a; Rodgers, Paxton, & Chabrol, 2009). Those with higher body mass index (BMI) experience these comments at higher frequencies (Eisenberg et al., 2011; Herbozo, Menzel & Thompson, 2013) and tend to respond more negatively than those with lower BMI (Calogero, Herbozo, & Thompson, 2009). There is also evidence that a more negative impact (not higher frequency) of negative appearance commentary predicts greater body dissatisfaction and body surveillance in college women (Calogero et al., 2009).

Research has shown a positive relationship between negative appearance commentary and appearance comparisons in adolescent and young adult females (Shroff & Thompson, 2006; Thompson, Covert, & Stormer, 1999). Specifically, for adult women, increased frequency of negative appearance comments are associated with more upward comparisons with individuals perceived as more attractive (Bailey & Ricciardelli, 2010). In college women, upward comparisons occur often and have been associated with body dissatisfaction, negative affect (Leahy, Crowther, & Ciesla, 2011), and eating disorder psychopathology

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: sherbozo@llu.edu (S. Herbozo).

(Rancourt, Schaefer, Bosson, & Thompson, 2016). The tendency to engage in appearance comparisons has also been shown to predict poor body image (Myers & Crowther, 2009) and eating disturbances in college women (Schaefer & Thompson, 2014; Thompson et al., 1999).

Appearance comparisons have been identified as a mediator between negative appearance commentary and eating disturbance among college women (Thompson et al., 1999). To date, studies examining the role of appearance comparisons in this relationship have focused on the frequency of weight-based teasing in childhood/adolescence rather than the impact of negative commentary in young adulthood. Further, the impact of this relationship on binge eating is unknown. Binge eating is strongly linked to overweight/obesity (Wilfley, Wilson, & Agras, 2003) and psychiatric comorbidity (Bulik, Sullivan, & Kendler, 2002). Given longitudinal research showing higher lifetime prevalence of binge eating disorder in young adult women compared to other eating disorders by age 20 (Stice, Marti, & Rohde, 2013), college women are at increased risk for binge eating onset. Research examining potential interpersonal factors contributing to binge eating symptoms in this subgroup of women is warranted. Thus, we investigated appearance comparisons to others as a mediator of some of the variance in the relationship between negative appearance commentary from interpersonal sources and binge eating symptoms in college women. We hypothesized that appearance comparisons will mediate this relationship.

## 2. Materials and methods

### 2.1. Participants & procedure

Participants were selected from a larger sample of 345 undergraduate women recruited through psychology research pools at two southwestern universities ( $n = 108$ ) and one midsouthern university ( $n = 237$ ). We excluded two participants without age data and 26 participants who never received negative appearance comments. Missing data for appearance comparisons ( $n = 5$ ) and binge eating symptoms ( $n = 21$ ) were imputed using multiple imputation analyses with the assumption that the data were missing at random. Data from 317 women at the southwestern universities ( $n = 99$ ) and midsouthern university ( $n = 218$ ) were combined to increase racial diversity and generalizability. The mean age of participants was 19.18 years ( $SD = 1.49$ ) and mean BMI was 25.10 ( $SD = 6.04$ ). Participants self-identified as White ( $n = 146$ ; 46.1%), Black ( $n = 79$ ; 24.9%), Latina ( $n = 44$ ; 13.9%), Asian ( $n = 21$ ; 6.6%), multiracial ( $n = 23$ ; 7.3%), Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander ( $n = 2$ ; 0.6%), American Indian/Alaskan Native ( $n = 1$ ; 0.3%), and one declined to specify ( $n = 1$ ; 0.3%). They provided informed consent and received course credit as compensation for completing questionnaires

online. This study was approved by each university's institutional review board.

### 2.2. Measures

#### 2.2.1. Demographics

Participants reported age, height, weight, race, and ethnicity. Self-reported height and weight were used to calculate BMI ( $\text{kg}/\text{m}^2$ ).

#### 2.2.2. Appearance commentary

The 9-item Negative Weight and Shape subscale of the Verbal Commentary on Physical Appearance Scale (VCOPAS; Herbozo & Thompson, 2006a) was used to assess the frequency and impact of receiving negative weight/shape comments. Frequency ratings range from 1 = *never* to 5 = *always*. For items with a frequency rating of 2 or above, impact ratings were also provided ranging from 1 = *very positive* to 5 = *very negative*, with higher scores indicating more negative impact (Herbozo & Thompson, 2006a). This study only used the impact ratings. The VCOPAS Negative Weight and Shape subscale has demonstrated good reliability and convergent validity in college women (Herbozo & Thompson, 2006b); current sample  $\alpha = 0.91$ .

#### 2.2.3. Appearance comparisons

The 11-item Physical Appearance Comparison Scale-Revised (PACS-R; Schaefer & Thompson, 2014) assessed the frequency of making physical appearance comparisons in various contexts, with responses ranging from 0 = *never* to 4 = *always*. The PACS-R has shown excellent reliability and convergent validity in college women (Schaefer & Thompson, 2014); current sample  $\alpha = 0.98$ .

#### 2.2.4. Binge eating symptoms

The 16-item Binge Eating Scale (BES; Gormally, Black, Daston, & Rardin, 1982) assessed binge eating symptomatology including behavioral, affective, and cognitive features. Each item includes three to four statements coded from 0 to 4 and total scores range from 0 to 46, with higher scores indicating greater severity of binge eating symptoms. While some BES items reflect features of BED in the diagnostic criteria for BED, additional criteria such as binge eating frequency and duration is not captured in the BES. Thus, the BES does not assess the full criteria of a BED diagnosis. The BES has shown good reliability and concurrent validity in women with binge eating (Timmerman, 1999) and has been used with college women (Boggiano et al., 2014); current sample  $\alpha = 0.91$ .

**Table 1**  
Descriptive statistics and model coefficients for the mediation analysis.

Antecedent		Consequent			Y (binge eating symptoms)			
		M (appearance comparisons)			Y (binge eating symptoms)			
		Coeff.	SE	p	Coeff.	SE	p	
X (impact of negative commentary)	a	7.700	0.801	<0.001	c'	0.925	0.553	>0.09
M (appearance comparisons)		–	–	–	b	0.264	0.034	<0.001
C <sub>1</sub> (BMI)	f <sub>1</sub>	0.296	0.111	<0.009	g <sub>1</sub>	0.187	0.068	<0.007
Constant	i <sub>1</sub>	–11.167	3.69	<0.003	i <sub>2</sub>	–2.581	2.272	>0.25
		R <sup>2</sup> = 0.261			R <sup>2</sup> = 0.279			
		F(2,313) = 55.396, p < 0.001			F(3,312) = 40.256, p < 0.001			
Variable		Means and standard deviations						
		M		SD				
Impact of negative commentary		3.53		0.84				
Appearance comparisons		23.40		13.59				
BMI		25.10		6.04				
Binge eating symptoms		11.54		8.34				

Note. BMI = body mass index. All coefficients reported are unstandardized.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5038812>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5038812>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)