



Self-compassion as a mediator between attachment anxiety and body appreciation: An exploratory model



Trisha L. Raque-Bogdan^{a,*}, Sarah Piontkowski^b, Kayi Hui^c, Kathryn Schaefer Ziemer^d, Patton O. Garrriott^e

^a University of Denver, Department of Counseling Psychology, Katherine A. Ruffatto Hall, 263, 1999 E. Evans Ave., Denver, CO 80208, USA

^b Boston College, University Counseling Services, Gasson 001, Chestnut Hill, MA 02467, USA

^c The Ohio State University, Counseling and Consultation Service, Younkin Success Center, 4th Floor, 1640 Neil Avenue, Columbus, OH 43201, USA

^d Virginia Tech, Biocomplexity Institute of Virginia Tech (0379), National Capitol Region, 900 N. Glebe Road, Arlington, VA 22203, USA

^e Department of Counseling Psychology, University of Denver, 1999 E. Evans Ave., KRH 201A, Denver, CO 80208, USA

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 4 December 2015

Received in revised form 4 August 2016

Accepted 5 August 2016

Keywords:

Attachment
Self-compassion
Body appreciation
College women

ABSTRACT

Body appreciation has been found to be linked to interpersonal and intrapersonal factors, with attachment styles and self-compassion separately identified as important correlates. The present study examined these variables together in a model, and we hypothesized that maternal attachment anxiety was related to peer and romantic attachment anxiety, which, in turn, was associated with self-compassion and body appreciation. Using structural equation modeling, this cross-sectional study with a sample of 1306 incoming first year college women found that the proposed model explained 40% of the variance in body appreciation. Results further revealed that peer and romantic attachment anxiety mediated the relationships between maternal attachment anxiety and self-compassion, and that self-compassion mediated the associations between peer and romantic attachment anxiety and body appreciation. Self-compassion appears to hold a central role in explaining the relation between attachment anxiety and body appreciation.

© 2016 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Introduction

Scholars have suggested that positive body image is an essential component to understand how to best protect against body dissatisfaction and disordered eating (Cook-Cottone, 2015; Grogan, 2010; Piran, 2015; Striegel-Moore & Cachelin, 1999; Tylka, 2011; Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015b), as well as enhance individuals' intuitive eating (Iannantuono & Tylka, 2012). Body appreciation is one key component of positive body image (Avalos, Tylka, & Wood-Barcalow, 2005; Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015b; Wood-Barcalow, Tylka, & Augustus-Horvath, 2010). It is comprised of (a) positive opinions of the body, regardless of the imperfections that individuals perceive about their weight, shape, and appearance; (b) an awareness of and attention to the body's needs; (c) participation in behaviors that promote the body's health; and (d) safeguarding the body by rejecting unrealistic body ideals portrayed in the media

(Avalos et al., 2005; Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015a). A burgeoning literature connects body appreciation to interpersonal relationships and intrapersonal dynamics (e.g., Iannantuono & Tylka, 2012), with attachment styles and self-compassion separately identified as important correlates of body appreciation (Iannantuono & Tylka, 2012; Schoenfeld & Webb, 2013). However, theoretical models of body appreciation that identify predictors and explanatory pathways are needed to better inform interventions aimed at enhancing body appreciation (Halliwel, 2015).

The goal of the current study was to present an exploratory model in which self-compassion, the ability to be kind to oneself in the midst of difficulties (Neff, 2003), accounts for the relationship between attachment anxiety and body appreciation in a large sample of college women. Specifically, we examined how attachment anxiety in maternal relationships relates to attachment anxiety in peer and romantic relationships. Self-compassion was hypothesized to mediate, or explain, the relations of attachment anxiety with peers and attachment anxiety with romantic partners to body appreciation. Previous studies have shown that self-compassion mediates the relation between attachment and general well-being (Neff & McGehee, 2010; Raque-Bogdan, Ericson, Jackson, Martin, & Bryan, 2011; Wei, Liao, Ku, & Shaffer, 2011), and that

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: Trisha.Raque-Bogdan@du.edu (T.L. Raque-Bogdan), sarah.piontkowski@gmail.com (S. Piontkowski), hui.68@osu.edu (K. Hui), schaeferkl@gmail.com (K.S. Ziemer).

self-compassion is a relevant construct when exploring body image (e.g., Schoenefeld & Webb, 2013). Further, self-compassion training has predicted lower levels of body dissatisfaction and higher levels of body appreciation (Albertson, Neff, & Dill-Shackleford, 2015). Thus, we expect that self-compassion may represent one mechanism by which attachment anxiety connects to body appreciation. Furthermore, college women were selected for this study because high attachment anxiety has been connected to lower body satisfaction for women, but not for men (Hui & Brown, 2013).

Given the specific stressors faced by college-aged women and the unique relationship between positive body image and well-being not captured fully by negative body image (Avalos et al., 2005; Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015a), it may be especially important to identify predictors of body appreciation for this population. Body appreciation is positively associated with intuitive eating (i.e., eating in response to hunger satiety cues; Augustus-Horvath & Tylka, 2011; Avalos & Tylka, 2006) and negatively associated with eating pathology (Ferreira, Pinto-Gouveia, & Duarte, 2011). Furthermore, preliminary studies on body appreciation suggest that positive body image has distinct associations with indicators of psychological well-being and adaptive eating behaviors that are not fully captured by negative body image (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015a). More specifically, after accounting for negative body image, body appreciation explained unique variance in U.S. college women's levels of self-esteem, proactive coping, and optimism (Avalos et al., 2005) and in Australian women's levels of engagement in unhealthy weight-loss practices (Andrew, Tiggemann, & Clark, 2016). Thus, negative body image and positive body image are not opposite ends of the same construct. In other words, a high level of positive body image does not reflect a low level of negative body image (Tylka, 2011). More research is needed on predictors of body appreciation, including interpersonal and intrapersonal variables.

Body image is a component of self-concept that emerges based on interactions with significant others, including early attachment figures (Kearney-Cooke, 2002). In a qualitative study with college women, Wood-Barcalow et al. (2010) reported that positive and unconditional acceptance from family, friends, and partners were perceived by women to be integral to the development and maintenance of their positive body image. Bowlby's attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969, 1980, 1988) explains how early experiences with caregivers shape mental representations, or working models, that individuals develop of significant others and of themselves. Secure attachment develops from receiving consistent and caring messages and support from early caretakers, thereby providing a model for how to develop and maintain strong interpersonal relationships (Bowlby, 1980). In contrast, negative working models (or insecure attachment) are described as being higher on the two continuous, orthogonal attachment dimensions of anxiety and avoidance (Mikulincer, Shaver, & Pereg, 2003; Shaver & Fraley, 2004). Specifically, individuals who are high in attachment anxiety are preoccupied with feelings of unworthiness and excessive worry about the availability and responsiveness of their significant others. Individuals high in attachment avoidance experience discomfort with intimacy, are likely to suppress emotional responses, and become excessively self-reliant during times of distress (Fraley & Shaver, 2000). Individuals who have negative working models may develop a poor self-concept that results in decreased body satisfaction and greater concern about weight (Perry, Silvera, Neilands, Rosenvinge, & Hanssen, 2008). In contrast, a positive working model (or secure attachment) is indicated when attachment anxiety and avoidance are both low. Those with a positive working model may have a stronger self-concept that is linked to fewer body image problems (Ackard, Neumark-Sztainer, Story, & Perry, 2006; Panfilis, Rabbaglio, Rossi, Zita, & Maggini, 2003). Attachment anxiety has been identified as a relevant interpersonal barrier to body appreciation (Iannantuono & Tylka, 2012). Previous studies

have found that adult attachment anxiety, but not avoidance, was associated with lower body satisfaction (Cash, Theriault, & Annis, 2004; Cheng & Mallinckrodt, 2009) and lower body appreciation (Iannantuono & Tylka, 2012; van den Brink, Smeets, Hessen, & Woertman, 2015).

Prior research on attachment anxiety and body image has focused on adult attachment style that is theorized to have developed out of relationships with parental or other early caregivers. In particular, mothers are considered a primary attachment figure across developmental stages (Freeman & Brown, 2001), and have significant influence on later attachment relationships with peers and romantic partners (Guarnieri, Smorti, & Tani, 2015). In regards to body image, maternal relationships have been reported to have unique associations with the development of positive body image for Hispanic, Anglo (Hahn-Smith & Smith, 2001), and African American female adolescents (Pope, Corona, & Belgrave, 2014). Sira and Ballard (2009) also reported that maternal attachment was strongly associated with positive body image for White female college students. Given the increasing importance that peer and romantic relationships take on in young adulthood (Doyle, Lawford, & Markiewicz, 2009), accounting for maternal attachment anxiety and how it relates to other relationship domains may be helpful for identifying interpersonal correlates of body image.

The development of peer and romantic relationships is considered one of the most important social milestones during adolescence and early adulthood, and these relationships have been connected to young women's body image. O'Koon (1997) found that in a sample of high school students, peer attachment was related to body and self-image, whereas maternal attachment was not. O'Koon concluded that relationships with one's peers, especially for female students, were more important for their body image than their relationships with their mother. Yet, this study examined separate correlations between peer and maternal attachment with body image, failing to account for the relationship between maternal and peer attachment. When accounting for the link between maternal and peer attachment, Patton, Beaujean, and Benedict (2014) reported that peer attachment anxiety was one mediational pathway through which parental care was indirectly connected to body image dissatisfaction, and that the relationship with one's mother continued to make a unique contribution to body image dissatisfaction after accounting for other variables. Moving beyond a deficit model of body image, additional research is needed to identify what unique and overlapping contributions maternal and peer attachment anxiety make to understanding how young women might develop positive opinions of their bodies.

In addition to peers, romantic attachment has been indicated as becoming increasingly important for body image as individuals age (Tantleff-Dunn & Gokee, 2002). High levels of romantic attachment anxiety have predicted higher levels of body dissatisfaction whereas romantic attachment avoidance failed to be a significant predictor (Cash et al., 2004; Hardit & Hannum, 2012). Only two studies thus far has examined romantic attachment anxiety and body appreciation, finding that anxiety in this particular relationship domain was negatively related to body appreciation (Iannantuono & Tylka, 2012; van den Brink et al., 2015). Feeling less anxious in their romantic relationships may help young women feel more connected to their bodies in positive ways.

In addition to exploring attachment anxiety in relation to body appreciation, research indicates that attachment processes may play an important role in the development of self-compassion (Neff & McGehee, 2010), and self-compassion has been linked to body image (e.g., Wasylkiw, MacKinnon, & MacLellan, 2012). Self-compassion is conceptualized as being composed of the three basic components of self-kindness, common humanity and mindfulness, which are contrasted, respectively, with self-judgment, isolation, and over-identification (Neff, 2003). Self-kindness involves

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7263164>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7263164>

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