



Perceiving beauty in all women: Psychometric evaluation of the Broad Conceptualization of Beauty Scale



Tracy L. Tylka^{a,*}, Amy C. Iannantuono^b

^a Department of Psychology, The Ohio State University, Columbus and Marion Campuses, Marion, OH, United States

^b Central Ohio Mental Health Center, Delaware, OH, United States

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ABSTRACT

Women's ability to broadly conceptualize beauty (i.e., perceive many looks, appearances, body sizes/shapes, and inner characteristics as beautiful) has been identified as a facet of positive body image in qualitative research. A scale is needed to be able to assess this construct within quantitative research. Therefore, we developed the Broad Conceptualization of Beauty Scale (BCBS), which measures the extent women define female beauty widely within external and internal characteristics, and examined its psychometric properties among four community samples totaling 1086 women. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses revealed a unidimensional structure with nine items. The internal consistency, test–retest reliability, and construct (convergent, discriminant, and incremental) validity of its scores were upheld. Researchers and clinicians can use the BCBS alone to assess women's perceptions of female beauty, or they can use the BCBS alongside women's perceptions of self-beauty to more comprehensively explore women's ability to broadly conceptualize beauty for others and themselves.

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Introduction

Within the last decade, research on positive body image has escalated, which has resulted in knowledge being amassed about its various components and expressions (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015c). Yet, much remains to be gleaned from positive body image inquiry, as this nascent area remains diminutive in comparison to the rich history of negative body image scholarship. Continued inquiry into positive body image is critical—it complements the literature on negative body image by moving beyond lowering body dissatisfaction and toward appreciating, respecting, celebrating, and honoring the body (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015b). This knowledge then can be used to enhance programs and interventions that aim to lower body image disturbance, eating disorder symptoms, and body-related stigma (Cook-Cottone, 2015; Piran, 2015; Tylka et al., 2014). Indeed, studying positive body image is “essential to the future of the field” (Smolak & Cash, 2011, p. 472).

The construct that has been at the forefront of positive body image research is *body appreciation* (Tiggemann, 2015), which has been described as holding favorable opinions toward one's body,

accepting its unique characteristics, respecting it by taking care of its needs, and believing that it is beautiful and valuable despite any perceived inconsistency with media-promoted appearance ideals (Avalos, Tylka, & Wood-Barcalow, 2005; Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015a). Body appreciation, as assessed via both the original Body Appreciation Scale (BAS; Avalos et al., 2005) and the updated Body Appreciation Scale-2 (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015b), is connected to well-being. More specifically, body appreciation has evidenced strong *positive* relationships with indices of adjustment such as self-compassion, self-esteem, life satisfaction, positive affect, intuitive eating, and sexual satisfaction, as well as strong *inverse* relationships with indices of distress such as negative affect, thin-ideal internalization, disordered eating, maladaptive perfectionism, body comparison, and cosmetic surgery endorsement (Andrew, Tiggemann, & Clark, 2015; Avalos et al., 2005; Homan & Tylka, 2015; Iannantuono & Tylka, 2012; Satinsky, Reece, Dennis, Sanders, & Bardzell, 2012; Swami et al., 2011; Tylka & Kroon Van Diest, 2013; Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015b; Wasylikiw, MacKinnon, & MacLellan, 2012). Body appreciation also has been shown to buffer the deleterious effects of viewing images of thin models. Halliwell (2013) found that women high in body appreciation did not place more importance on their appearance concerns after viewing images of thin models, whereas women low in body appreciation placed more importance on their appearance concerns after viewing these images. This buffering effect was particularly pronounced for women high in thin-ideal

* Corresponding author at: Department of Psychology, Ohio State University, 1465 Mt. Vernon Avenue, Marion, OH 43302, United States. Tel.: +1 740 725 6384; fax: +1 614 292 5817.

E-mail address: tylka.2@osu.edu (T.L. Tylka).

internalization, suggesting that high levels of body appreciation may offset harm associated with both thin-ideal internalization and thin-ideal media exposure.

Continuing research on body appreciation is critical, as much has yet to be learned about how it is expressed among various social identities and special populations (Tiggemann, 2015) and how it can be used within prevention and treatment of eating disorders (Cook-Cottone, 2015; Piran, 2015). However, for these same reasons, scholars also need to begin investigating additional components and expressions of positive body image that extend past body appreciation as defined by Avalos et al. (2005) and Tylka and Wood-Barcalow (2015a). In fact, additional facets of positive body image have been identified within qualitative studies of adolescents (Frisén & Holmqvist, 2010; Holmqvist & Frisé, 2012; McHugh, Coppola, & Sabiston, 2014) and young adult women (Wood-Barcalow, Tylka, & Augustus-Horvath, 2010). These additional facets include broadly conceptualizing beauty, adaptive appearance investment, inner positivity influencing outer demeanor, and filtering information in a body-protective manner (for reviews, see Tylka, 2011, 2012; Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015c). Measuring these facets is necessary to comprehensively understand the positive body image construct (Webb, Wood-Barcalow, & Tylka, 2015).

In the present study, we aimed to develop a scale to assess one of these facets: broadly conceptualizing beauty. According to Tylka and Wood-Barcalow (2015c), individuals who broadly conceptualize beauty perceive a wide range of physical appearances as beautiful, whether these appearances are largely unchangeable (e.g., body shape, weight) or more easily modifiable (e.g., personal style). Those who broadly conceptualize beauty also tend to draw from inner characteristics, such as confidence and self-acceptance, when defining beauty. Further, broadly conceptualizing beauty is not limited to noticing beauty in others but also noticing beauty in their own features that may not align with sociocultural appearance ideals.

There is an immediate need for such a measure. First, broad conceptualization of beauty has been identified as a component of positive body image across multiple qualitative studies (see Bailey, Gammage, van Ingen, & Ditor, 2015; Frisé & Holmqvist, 2010; Holmqvist & Frisé, 2012; McHugh et al., 2014; Parker et al., 1995; Wood-Barcalow et al., 2010). For instance, adolescents with a positive body image from Sweden mentioned that a diversity of body sizes can be beautiful and that inner personality characteristics, such as happiness, shape their perceptions of (especially) girls' and women's beauty (Holmqvist & Frisé, 2012). The authors concluded that positive body image can be enhanced by providing adolescents with "alternative ways of thinking about appearance ideals, beauty, and attractiveness" (Holmqvist & Frisé, 2012, p. 393). College women from the U.S. emphasized that beauty can be defined and expressed in an indefinite number of ways, and thus should not be compared among individuals (Wood-Barcalow et al., 2010). Canadian adults with spinal cord injuries who espoused a positive body image emphasized that all body shapes and sizes are beautiful and that beauty encompasses external and internal characteristics that are ignored by media (Bailey et al., 2015).

Second, such a measure would honor conceptualizations of beauty endorsed by non-White cultures, whose appearances tend to be marginalized, ignored, belittled, or pathologized when compared to White standards of beauty. In their mixed-methods study of body image, Parker et al. (1995) found that African American adolescent girls were more satisfied with their body shape than White adolescent girls—the authors attributed this difference to African American girls' flexibility when conceptualizing beauty. While White girls largely equated beauty with thinness, height (i.e., tall), and hair type (i.e., long, blonde), African American girls emphasized that beauty is making "what you've got work for you"

and believed that beauty emerges in internal characteristics (e.g., confident but not conceited, self-acceptance), is reflected in a multitude of body sizes and shapes, and is manifested in personal style (Parker et al., 1995, p. 108). Adolescent Aboriginal girls from Canada viewed beauty as originating from the inside and reflected outward in cultural practices, self-care, choice of style, and grooming, rather than conforming to a certain body type (McHugh et al., 2014). These girls engaged in pow-wow dance, which facilitated their awareness of the beauty within themselves, nature, and their culture.

Third, such a measure may be used to develop interventions to help prevent and/or alleviate internalization of media appearance ideals (i.e., the adoption of such ideals as one's own personal standard; Heinberg, Thompson, & Stormer, 1995). In particular, thin-ideal internalization has been identified as a strong predictor of body image disturbance and eating disorder symptoms among adolescent girls in prospective research (Stice, 2002; Thompson & Stice, 2001), and the main target variable for dissonance-based eating disorder secondary prevention programs (Stice, Rohde, & Shaw, 2013). Broadly conceptualizing beauty would be incompatible with internalizing media appearance ideals. For example, an already formed broad conceptualization of beauty theoretically should prevent a girl or woman from endorsing thinness as a personal standard. If a girl or woman has already internalized the thin ideal, increasing her broad conceptualization of beauty may create dissonance, which may lessen her adherence to thinness as a personal standard. A measure of broad conceptualization of beauty could be used to examine these assertions. Indeed, scholars have called for the increased use of positive body image measures in eating disorder prevention and treatment (Cook-Cottone, 2015; Halliwell, Jarman, McNamara, Risdon, & Jankowski, 2015; Piran, 2015).

To date, there is no existing comprehensive measure of broadly conceptualizing beauty. Although Item 10 of the BAS-2 assesses perceptions of self-beauty, i.e., "I feel like I am beautiful even if I am different from media images of attractive people (e.g., models, actresses/actors)," the BAS-2 does not comprehensively assess this construct, such as seeing beauty in others. Being able to see beauty within others *and* the self has been noted as important to positive body image for girls and women in particular (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015c). Thus, in two studies, we developed the Broad Conceptualization of Beauty Scale (BCBS), evaluated its factor structure, and examined the reliability and validity of its scores.

Study 1

Study 1 had five stages. First, we developed potential BCBS items that tap into the broad conceptualization of beauty construct. Second, we sought external review of these items for content coverage and clarity, and modified the items accordingly. Third, using data garnered from three independent samples of online community women, we examined the factor structure of the BCBS using exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. Fourth, we estimated the internal consistency, construct (i.e., convergent, discriminant, and incremental) validity, and criterion-related validity of the BCBS's scores. Fifth, we estimated the test–retest reliability of the BCBS's scores among women who completed the BCBS twice, three weeks apart.

Development of the BCBS Items and Expert Review

We generated 24 items that assessed a broad definition of physical or external beauty or contributions of internal personality characteristics to perceptions of beauty. We also generated eight items that assessed a broad conceptualization of self-beauty. Five scholars, who have published extensively in the areas of

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