Diary Study: Effects of Daily Fat-Shaming Experiences on Attentional Bias

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Introduction

- Fat-shaming, *the act of criticizing individuals based on their body weight,* is a common phenomenon that often leaves a person feeling rejected[1]
- External devaluation such as this can lead to negative self-perception and evaluation, increasing risk for poor mental health[2]
- Understanding how our current fat-shaming environment can influence implicit cognitive processes and potentially perpetuate body image insecurity is important
- We explored the impact of real-life fat-shaming on implicit social cognitive biases using a 4-day diary design

Method

Sample:
- Women (*N*=17, ages 20 ± 2) without history of depression, anxiety or eating disorders

Measures:
- Day 0 baseline survey: demographics and self-evaluation measures (e.g., Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale)
- Day 1, 2 & 3 at-home assessment:

a) Modified attentional dot-probe (a reaction-timed task assessing automatic attentional bias responses to threat-related information)[3]
b) Questionnaire: negative affect; daily fat-shaming experiences, body-weight related activities

Results To Date

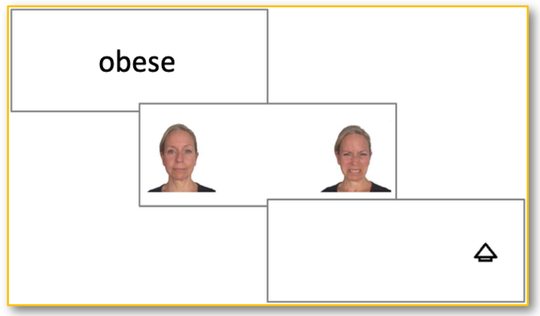
- Fat-shaming experience was associated with attentional bias toward rejection when cued with '*obese*' on average across days (n=14; *r*=0.714, *p*=0.004) and within days (average *r*=0.30)

Table 1: Pearson Correlations

	Total fat-shaming	Fat-shaming Day 1	Fat-shaming Day 2	Fat-shaming Day 3
Average rejection bias	**.714****	.460	**.542***	**.596***
Rejection bias Day 1	**.537***	.410	.315	**.543***
Rejection bias Day 2	**.701***	**.697***	.428	**.677***
Rejection bias Day 3	-.066	.040	-.154	-.072

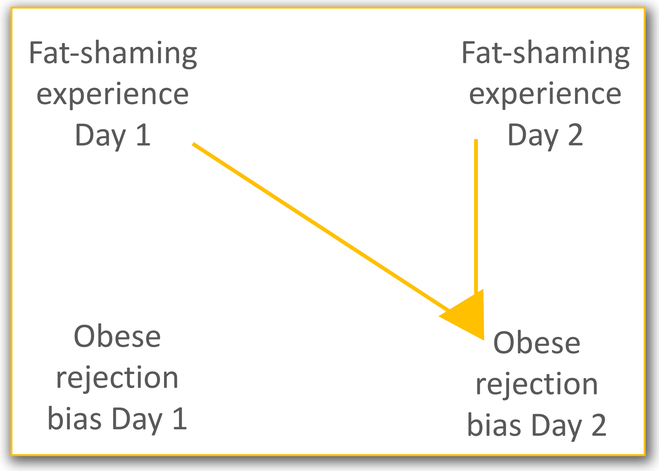
***Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)*
**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)*
Statistical analysis is currently underpowered by low N; data collection is continuing

Figure 1: Modified dot-probe task



Note: When cued with 'obese', participants who experienced fat-shaming event(s) were faster at identifying the arrow probe if it appeared behind a frowning face.

Figure 2: Regression Analysis



Note: Results of the regression indicated the two predictors (Fat-shaming experience Day 1 and Day 2) explained 55.7% of the variance in Obese rejection bias Day 2 (R2=.557, F(2,13)=8.164, p=0.005). It was found that Fat-shaming experience Day 1 significantly predicted Obese rejection bias Day 2 (β = 0.676, p=0.007).

Conclusion

- Using the modified dot-probe task, results showed that real life fat-shaming had a negative impact on attentional bias
- Further analysis suggested a pattern of fat-shaming influence on attentional bias toward negative social cues and the possibility for a trend across days
- Fat-shaming experience on day 1 had effects on implicit processes that carried over to day 2, leading to other negative outcomes (e.g., fat-shaming experience on day 1 is correlated with lower body-weight satisfaction on day 2 (*r*= -0.421))
- Future directions include investigating long-term effects fat-shaming can have on implicit cognition and body/weight related behaviors

References

[1]Farrell, A. 2011. Fat Shame: Stigma and the Fat Body in American Culture. New York, NY: NYU Press.
[2]Sanchez, D.T., & Crocke, J. (2005). How investment in gender ideals affects well-being: The role of external contingencies of self-worth. Psychology of Women Quarterly, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.2005.00169.x
[3]Ravary, A., & Baldwin, M.W. (2018). Self-esteem vulnerabilities are associated with cued attentional biases toward rejection. Journal of Personality and Individual Differences, 126, 44-51.

This research is funded by the Fonds de recherche du Québec – Société et culture.
Psychology Undergraduate Research Day: Montreal, Qc. April 12, 2019.