

MEMORABLE MESSAGES CONCERNING BODY IMAGE:  
EXAMINING SOURCE AND CHANNEL

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## Abstract

In an individual's life there are messages that have a lasting impact and change the individual's perspective of themselves or the world. Memorable messages research has shown how impactful a single message can be, yet there is a lack of empirical research examining how two major components of memorable message, source and channel, can impact message reception. This study asked participants ( $n = 113$ ) for memorable messages that has impacted their body image the most. This study asked participants to recall and self-report the source, channel and content of their memorable message, then evaluate the message's impact using self-esteem and body appreciation measures. This study hypothesized that social media influencers will be sources of memorable messages. The hypothesis was supported; participants identified sources that they did not personally know (SMI/celebrities). Additionally, this study explicitly examined what channels were being used when receiving memorable messages and if social media was channel that individuals could receive memorable messages through. It was found that face-to-face was the channel used most to receive memorable messages; this study added to memorable message research by showing that social media can also be a channel used to receive memorable messages. Message content was coded into seven different themes (*health, appearance, weight, warnings, body's ability, encouragement and fitness*). This study hypothesized that there will be messages containing body positivity. This study added to memorable message research by finding that there were memorable messages containing body positivity.

*Keywords:* memorable messages, source, channel, body positivity

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE ..... 1

    Memorable Messages.....2

    Components of Memorable Messages .....4

        Source .....4

        Channel .....9

    Body Image.....13

        Body Dissatisfaction .....14

        Body Positivity.....15

    Source and Channels Impact on Body Image Messages .....17

    Present Study .....21

        Memorable Message Source .....21

        Memorable Message Channel.....22

        Memorable Message about Body Image.....23

        Memorable Message Impact .....24

CHAPTER 2. METHOD .....27

    Participants.....27

    Procedure .....27

    Measures .....28

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale .....	29
Body Appreciation Scale .....	29
CHAPTER 3. RESULTS .....	30
CHAPTER 4. DISCUSSION.....	38
Source .....	38
Channel .....	40
Memorable Message Content and Self-Reported Impact .....	43
Limitations and Future Directions .....	46
Conclusion .....	48
TABLES .....	50
Table 1 .....	50
Table 2 .....	51
APPENDICES .....	52
Appendix A.....	52
Appendix B .....	55
Appendix C .....	57
Appendix D.....	59
Appendix E .....	61
REFERENCES .....	62

## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Young adults receive thousands of messages in a day, through face-to-face dialogue, email, text or television. There are some messages that are easily forgotten, yet sometimes messages can have a lasting impact throughout a person's life. The concept *memorable message*, “verbal messages which may be remembered for extremely long periods of time and which people perceive as a major influence on the course of their lives” (Knapp, Stohl & Reardon, 1981, p. 27) helps researchers understand how these messages can have an impact. Two components of receiving a message include whom the message came from (source) and how it was delivered (channel). Memorable message research has yet to ask how these two components can impact and affect message reception.

In a young adult's life, body image is a salient topic. Messages found in the media portray unrealistic body images that young adults may seek to achieve. The concept of memorable message is one way that scholars have been studying body image (Dunleavy & Yang, 2015; Rubinsky, Hosek, & Hudak, 2018). Advertising and marketing in the media lately have been shown to support the ‘Body Positivity Movement’, a movement in which brands and companies promote bodies of all shapes and sizes. The media campaigns may have an impact on the way young adults perceive their own body image. Memorable messages can help find the specific messages these young adults carry with them about their body image and how those messages can have a lasting impact on an individual's self-esteem and body appreciation. By asking young adults for their memorable messages about body image, this study will uncover the different types of messages they receive.

This paper will first discuss the aspects of memorable messages and their impact on an individual's life. Next, it will take an in-depth look at different sources (social media influencers,

celebrities, parents and peers) and channels (social media, face-to-face) used to deliver memorable messages that have not been explicitly mentioned by past researchers but should be recognized. In addition, this paper will explore issues surrounding body image. Body image research shows a shifting perspective, from body dissatisfaction to body positivity. This paper will also discuss the impact source and channel can have on an individual's memorable message about body image. This study is extending the literature in memorable messages by taking a closer look into the message processing aspects of source and channel; as well as investigating body positivity themes in participants memorable messages.

### **Memorable Messages**

Memorable messages (MM's) were first introduced by Knapp and associates in 1981. Researchers found that people hold on to messages and that these messages can impact a person's future actions and decisions in life. Memorable messages have elements similar to persuasion, in that the content of a memorable message may leave the receiver with a behavioral change (O'Keefe, 2008). What separates memorable messages from being a persuasive message is the intent of the speaker; memorable messages are not typically delivered with the intent to change someone's behavior. Knapp and colleagues (1981) addressed the specific formula of memorable messages and found four major components: (1) the form and organization, (2) the content of the message, (3) the circumstances surrounding the message, and lastly (4) the reception of the message.

In terms of form and organization of a memorable message, Knapp and colleagues (1981) found that the messages follow the "if-then" rule-structure. The messages were found to have a conditional statement such as "when you look at the sun," followed by a consequence or action such as "your eyes will burn." This type of structured message allows the message to resemble

an injunction or command, which individuals are more likely to remember (Knapp et al., 1981). However, in a later study it was found that the messages did not have to follow the “if-then” rule-structure (Stohl, 1986); more recently, scholars found that most memorable messages did not follow the rule-structure at all (Holladay, 2002).

Memorable messages can be perceived differently from person to person; what may be meaningful to one individual can be completely irrelevant to another. Knapp and colleagues (1981) noted that messages could be popular sayings or cliché lines such as “This too shall pass” (p. 28). Despite those messages lack of originality, memorable messages may have meaning to some individuals that others may have overlooked. Messages could possibly be said in passing when the sender didn’t mean for the message to have a lasting impact. The context in which individuals receive messages can have an impact on what type of messages will be remembered and what type of messages are easily forgotten.

In Knapp and colleagues (1981) original study, researchers asked participants to recall a memorable message that impacted their life. All answers collected did not have a central theme, just that these messages were memorable. Due to the range of messages the researchers received, understanding the individual's circumstances was important to know. However, following the 1981 study, Stohl (1986) prompted the participants to think about messages received in a particular context: her research asked about the memorable messages found in an organizational setting. Following Stohl’s study, many researchers began to address specific topic areas where memorable messages would be impactful: such as messages about navigating college life (Nazione et.al., 2011) or body image (Reno & McNamee, 2015). By specifying the context or topic of the message, researchers can get a better understanding of what the participant was going through when they received their memorable message. It is now common for researchers

to state whom they want the messages to come from, or in what situation they want participants to recall messages.

Individuals may remember the message as either negative or positive. Knapp and colleagues (1981) uncovered that most of the messages gathered through their initial study were positive and that even “when negative messages were recalled, they were presented in the context of having ‘overcome’ them” (p. 38). Studies that followed did not stress the importance of whether the messages were negative or positive but rather recognized that these messages can be framed in many ways (Kauffman, Orbe, Johnson & Cooke-Jackson, 2013). Kauffman and colleagues found that when individuals explained their first-time sexual experiences, the messages were split between negatively framed narratives and positively framed narratives; there were even a few that were neutrally framed.

### **Components of Memorable Messages**

#### **Source**

To date, very little research has examined the effects that “source” can have on memorable messages. In this study, a *source* is referring to whom the message comes from. The source of a message is an important aspect to look at when understanding memorable messages. Depending on who the source of a message is, the reception of a message can vary. This section will discuss the effects different sources could have on a memorable message.

Knapp and colleagues identified the source of a memorable message as typically people who have an influence in the individual’s life. Memorable messages are often from someone of higher standing, for example in a professional setting, the boss (Stohl, 1986). Often if the source is not someone of higher rank, it is someone who is older than the individual or who has more life experience in a particular topic. It is common to see the source be a family member, like a



mother or father (e.g., Jackl, 2016; Thompson & Zaitchik, 2012; Waldron, Kloeber, Goman, Piermonte, & Danaher, 2014).

When looking at an individual's relationship with the source, many studies look to familial relationships. A study done by Kellas (2010) recounted the memorable messages given by mothers to their daughters about romantic relationships. Kellas' study notes how important mother-daughter relationships are when understanding messages passed down about romantic relationships. Kellas' research only addressed the messages from mothers to daughters and no other familial source. In order to support the idea that the mother/daughter relationship is influential to memorable messages concerning romantic relationships, other relational dyads should be observed. If other relations, like father-daughter or brother-sister dyads, were explored, there would be more evidence supporting the mother as a highly influential source. By looking at other types of dyads, research would be able to show which source is most influential.

As discussed above, it is common for the source of a memorable message to be a family member, or someone close to the individual. A study done by Dunleavy and Yang (2015) looked at three types of college students (student athletes, freshman, and sorority members) and the memorable messages they received about body image from around their college campus. Dunleavy and Yang found that across all types of students, memorable messages were received primarily from someone close to the participants. However, the researchers found that with student athletes and sorority members, these messages were not from family members like previous research suggests.

Dunleavy and Yang found that with each type of student, the source was someone the participants had a relationship with. Athletes had the majority of their memorable messages come from the individual's coach (55.6%), a common message theme was advice for dieting and

motivation. Sorority members had most of their messages came from a sorority sister (62.2%), these messages were also centered around advice for dieting or personal comments about the sorority. Finally, the source most common for incoming freshmen was a female friend (37%) about general behavioral advice (Dunleavy & Yang, 2015).

Dunleavy and Yang suggest that when an individual is in a group, like a sports team or a sorority house, the people who share that same social identity may have more of an impact than a familial source when it comes recalling a memorable message. The content of the memorable message differed across the student athlete and sorority groups; student athletes remembered messages from their coaches about dieting, rather than sorority members who recalled messages of looking good for your group's status. It would be logical to assume that if another source (e.g. a mother or father) gave the same message, it may not have the same impact. It would also be reasonable to conclude that depending on who the message source is, and the relationship the individual may have with the source, message impact can vary.

Dunleavy and Yang have highlighted that memorable messages can come from family members, coaches, peers, and other interpersonal relationships. However, there is a gap in memorable message literature; little is known about messages coming from people the individual may not personally know. In previous research, messages have been shown to be received through mass media or social media channels (e.g., Smith & Butler Ellis, 2001; Miczo, Danhour, Lester, & Bryant, 2013; see below). The sources found in mass media or social media tend to be people that the average person may not know.

Through mass media and social media, possible sources for a message could be celebrities or social influencers. The word "celebrity" refers to someone who is famous and widely known. Cashmore (2006) states "we live in a consumer society" (p. 2) and celebrities

have “become the product” (p. 3). As a consumer society, we look to celebrities for more than entertainment; we look at them for their lifestyles and try to find ways to emulate it. As a society, our shift in focusing on celebrities as more than entertainment started in the 1960s. In 1963, during the filming of her movie *Cleopatra*, actress Elizabeth Taylor gained a lot of attention for being caught in an adulterous relationship with her co-star. The use of a telephoto lens allowed a paparazzi to take a photo from a distance far enough away that the pair did not think they would be noticed. This incident propelled the public to suddenly crave more information about celebrities and their personal lives (Cashmore, 2006). While the public did not know Elizabeth Taylor personally, people wanted to know more about her, her life, and the consequences following her adulterous relationship. Now, people want to feel close to celebrities.

Technology has come a long way since the 1960s and society now has the ability to interact with their favorite celebrity via social media. Cashmore (2006) believes “celebrity culture” happened because of society's consumer habits and “as long as consumers maintain an interest in them [celebrities], they remain celebrities” (p. 6). With social media sites growing in numbers, it is possible for anyone to become a celebrity; thus, it is no surprise that Millennials are invested in celebrity culture (Cashmore, 2006). Additionally, what is considered a celebrity has changed in the last 50 years. The public still values traditional celebrities, such as famous actors or actresses, but now there are also social media influencers (SMIs). SMIs “represent a new type of independent third-party endorser who shape audience attitudes through blogs, tweets, and the use of other social media” (Freberg, Graham, McGaughey, & Freberg, 2011, p. 90).

The reach that SMIs have is wide; for example, one of the top social media sites, YouTube, shows that their number one followed account PewDiePie, has over 101 million

subscribers. It was reported that the popular game Minecraft had a resurgence thanks to PewDiePie (Alexander, 2019). In 2018, the popular game Minecraft had a monthly user base of 91 million players (Gilbert, 2018). PewDiePie introduced his 'Minecraft' video series in June of 2019 and within just a few short months the numbers for 'Minecraft' users surpassed 250 million players for the first time since 2017 (Alexander, 2019). PewDiePie is just one example of a social media influencer's impact on society; this example shows that SMI can cause a change in people's attitudes and behavior. This example further suggests that individuals who engage with SMI take action after they become subjected to SMIs' messages. Research should examine the impact that SMIs can have on the ideas and behaviors of their consumers. By uncovering the impact that SMIs have, we can begin to understand how influential SMIs' messages are to their consumers. The actions consumers took after being subjected to just one SMI's message shows the message was memorable because it influenced the individual's actions. SMIs' messages should be examined through memorable message research to uncover how they have an impact on their consumers. Thus, this study will examine SMIs as a source for memorable messages.

Research that has covered the effects of celebrities and other social influencers has mainly been through a marketing or business lens. Research has shown that celebrities and SMIs have an impact on fashion consumption (Sudha & Sheena, 2017) such as trending fashion for the upcoming seasons. Regarding tourism, there was a spike in the travel industry which led people to travel to different Greek Islands (Chatzigeorgiou, 2017); the travel spike was due to SMIs posting about their vacations (Magno & Cassia, 2018). Lastly, SMIs' impact general product placement (McCormick, 2016), showing that once celebrities and SMI's advertise a product, the company is more likely to sell said product. Research has shown the impact that celebrities and SMIs can have on industries; however, studies have yet to examine what kind of messages these

sources produce. Research on memorable messages has yet to examine the effects that sources like SMIs and celebrities have on media consumers.

To summarize, a source can have an impact on a message's content and memorability. The source of a memorable message typically comes from an individual that someone has an established relationship with; however, memorable message research has yet to examine celebrities or SMIs as possible sources. This study seeks to understand the importance that *source* can have on the reception and impact of memorable messages. By introducing different sources like celebrities and SMIs, this study wants to add to the understanding of memorable messages.

### **Channel**

The *channel* is what the source uses; it is “how” the message was delivered. A channel is an integrated platform that allows for multiple sets of media; it is a way to distribute messages and communicate with others. An example of a channel can be face-to-face, email or Facebook. Throughout memorable message research, many studies have often mixed up or combined the terms “source” and “channel”. For example, researchers in a 2013 study identified mass media and university campus as a “source”, when these should be considered channels (Miczo et al., 2013).

There are many channels used in everyday life; most commonly, people tend to communicate through face-to-face interactions. Face-to-face communication is a common channel through which memorable messages are delivered (Cranmer & Myers, 2017). A study done by Stohl (1986) found that most memorable messages were delivered through face-to-face interactions. Much of the memorable message research that followed did not address the channel in which messages came through.

When examining memorable messages, researchers have not explored the effects different channels may have on a message. However, there are situations when one channel seemed preferred over another. A study done by Keeley (2004) looked at memorable messages people received during final conversations. Individuals had conversations with a dying loved one; all the messages happened through a face-to-face interaction. To have an interaction of that nature requires a certain amount of physical closeness. It can be assumed that these types of conversations around death/dying and spirituality would be best received through face-to-face communication.

There has been research that asked participants about a specific situation that may only call for one channel. A study by Waldron, Kloeber, Goman, Piemonte, and Danaher (2014) examined memorable messages parents gave to their children about right and wrong. The authors noted that “most often (messages) were delivered at home, in face-to-face conversation” (p. 390). Parents also noted that these conversations happened mainly with just one child present. Researchers then suggested that “private conversations adapted to a given child may be more impactful than those delivered before an audience of siblings, friends, or strangers” (p. 390). Waldron et al. (2014) study suggested that being in a private face-to-face setting could help the impact of a message.

Many of the studies that examine memorable messages found that the messages were received in face-to-face, interpersonal interaction; however, this is not always the case. In the initial examination of MM’s there were a few messages that were received through the telephone (Knapp et al., 1981). In a later study, it showed that some messages were received through mass media (Miczo, et al., 2013). Miczo and associates investigated which were the most popular channels through which college students received messages about the H1N1 flu. The participants

answered an open-ended response which the researchers coded. Miczo and associates defined mass media as “news programs and PSAs on television, newspapers/magazines, Internet, radio, and pamphlets/posters” (p. 627), but later separated the idea of mass media into “campus related media” (flyers, newspaper/magazines, pamphlets) and “mass media” (television and radio). Miczo and associates found that, when a source was mentioned, college students stated they received messages about the H1N1 flu mostly through their campus related media (32.4%). The second most common channel was mass media (16.2%). In another study, researchers found that of all the memorable messages recalled, of the messages received, the most common channel was the media (Smith et.al., 2009).

The current study acknowledges that mass media can be a set of channels that individuals may receive messages through, but there is another set of channels yet to be examined. Social media, like mass media, is a set of channels. Social media, according to Merriam Webster, was first recognized in 2004 and is described as the “electronic communication through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content.” Social media channels such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube have been popular ways for individuals to exchange information. Social media can also give individuals the opportunity to connect interpersonally with people they know, but it also allows for a connection to people who the individuals may not know at all. For example, Facebook is a widely used channel that allows its users to maintain relationships or make new ones; the connection from user to user spans across the globe and allows its users to engage in online social commentary. In these sets of channels, messages can look different compared to when they are delivered face-to-face.

Depending on what channel an individual uses to communicate, the message and the amount of information can vary. A study done in 2013 by Berger and Iyengar examined the

differences in oral communication (face-to-face, via telephone) versus written communication (handwritten, text, email) when discussing consumer products. Berger and Iyengar separated participants into these two conditions; either the individual wrote out information they knew about products and their partner wrote back or talk about products and the partner would talk back.

From this study, it was found that there was more information as well as a wider variety of products mentioned in the written dyads compared to the oral dyads (Berger & Iyengar, 2013). Berger and Iyengar speculated that the reason there was more information in the written condition over the oral condition, was that written communication is more asynchronous. By allowing the participants time to respond, think and to articulate themselves, written communication was most advantageous to recalling consumer products. By examining different channels this study used, it can be inferred that because of the time allowed to express oneself, written communication could be better for receiving and remembering messages than oral communication. Receiving messages from channels other than face-to-face, such as social media sites, may allow messages to be more memorable. When participants have time to think and reflect about a topic, they are more likely to remember more information and be able to write more information down (Berger & Iyengar, 2013).

Research on memorable messages has yet to examine the channel's effect on message impact and reception. This study will explore the differences in channel between face-to-face and social media. Each channel (set of channels) presents different characteristics when communicating. Both face-to-face and social media allow for instant communication; however, when we need responses and feedback instantly, face-to-face always happens in real time. One characteristic that makes face-to-face and social media different from one another is the



channel's ability to preserve messages, or the longevity of the messages sent through the channel. In face-to-face communication, people leave a conversation with just a memory of what took place. If two individuals have the same conversation over a messaging app, each individual can go back and re-read exactly what they said and what their partner said. When recalling memorable messages, Knapp and colleagues (1981) acknowledge issues with long term memory. Long term memory is not word-for-word recollection but rather the gist of the memory. However, with social media sites, people have the ability to go back to a message they would like to recall. A message can be six months old or six years old, but a message on social media will last on that site for as long as the site exists or until user deletion. Messages received through face-to-face interactions may not be remembered in the exact way it was first presented; the memory of a message may get lost or lose its meaning over time.

To summarize, messages can come through social media sites or face-to-face interactions. Research has yet to examine the effects of channel on interpreting memorable messages. This study will examine *channel* as a main component to memorable messages. This study will also explore social media as a channel that individuals can receive memorable messages through. By comparing two channels, social media and face-to-face, this study aims to see the channel used has an impact on memorable messages.

### **Body Image**

This study will be focusing on memorable messages concerning body image. "Body image is the dynamic perception of one's body— how it looks, feels, and moves" (Croll, 2005 p. 155). The ideal body type can vary across cultures and ethnicities (Martin, 2010). An individual's perception of their body image can be influenced by beauty standards that belong to

a particular culture; in Western Culture, we praise the slim and shame the obese (Lake, Staiger, & Glowinski, 2000)

### **Body Dissatisfaction**

Research on body image often looks at an individual's body dissatisfaction (Barker & Galambos, 2003). When an individual does not have their ideal figure, this can lead to feelings of body dissatisfaction. Barker and Galambos conducted a study looking at potential risk factors for body dissatisfaction in boys and girls during adolescence; they examined both physical and contextual risks. Physical risks included body mass index (BMI) and figure management behaviors while contextual risks were teasing about appearance and pop culture. Researchers found that the physical risks, as well as the contextual risks, were most predictive of body dissatisfaction for girls. Similarly, for boys, the biggest risk factor was contextual; being teased by their peers contributed most to boys' body dissatisfaction (Barker & Galambos, 2003).

Research examining body image shows that males and females each have an idea of what their ideal body type should look like. In Western society, women's ideal body type is ultrathin (Martin, 2010) and men's ideal body figure is of muscularity and strength (Ridgeway & Tylka, 2005). In a recent study, it was found that girls/women had higher reports of thinness-oriented body dissatisfaction compared to boys/men (Karazsia, Murnen, & Tylka, 2017). In addition, boys/men showed higher reports of muscularity-oriented body dissatisfaction than girls/women (Karazsia, Murnen, & Tylka, 2017). One possible explanation for these types of beauty standards stems from the influence of celebrities and the media (Ridgeway & Tylka, 2005; Martin, 2010).

Typically, body image research has a negative frame. Research focuses on the downsides people encounter with not accepting their bodies. Individuals may go to extreme lengths to achieve their ideal body, which is why many articles concerning body image specifically look at

eating disorders (ED) (Eisenberg, Nicklett, Roeder, & Kirz, 2011). Eisenberg and colleagues (2011) ran an eating disorder screening on college students and found that 13.5% of undergraduate women and 3.6% of undergraduate men were screened positive for having an eating disorder. Of the undergraduate students who screened positive for an eating disorder, only 4.3% said that had been previously diagnosed. This study showed that there are a number of students who may have undiagnosed and untreated eating disorders.

In today's digital age, there is more exposure to eating disorders through the use of ProED websites; these are websites that encourage diets, weight loss tips, purging, and laxative options (Peebles et al., 2012). In a questionnaire addressing different types of eating disorder behaviors (purging, bingeing, laxatives, diet pills), Peebles et al. found that over 70% of their participants reported engaging in some form of ED behavior. Peebles and colleagues got their sample from people who have already visited or interacted with ProED websites. This study showed that the more frequently participants interacted with ProED websites the more likely they were to engage in extreme weight loss behaviors.

### **Body Positivity**

A study done by Wood-Barcalow, Tylka, and Augustus- Horvath (2010) acknowledged that there is a lot of research examining negative body image, but little research examining positive body image. Wood-Barcalow and colleagues described *body positivity* as “overarching love and respect for the body” (p. 112). By conducting interviews with participants, researchers asked prompts addressing body image. For example, “tell me a story of how you feel about your body” and “what does your body provide for you?” Wood-Barcalow and colleagues also asked “how do you define body image;” from the responses, researchers found characteristics of positive body image that could help young women to love and respect their body. A few

examples of characteristics include “body acceptance and love,” “filtering information in a body positive manner” and “finding others who are accepting of themselves” (p. 110). The researchers decided to add their findings to the definition of *body positivity*. They included “interpret(ing) incoming information in a body-protective manner whereby most positive information is internalized and most negative information is rejected or reframed” (p. 112).

In the past decade, there have been movements in the media on embracing body positivity (Cwynar-Horta, 2016). The ‘*body positivity movement*’ is a movement encouraging women to have a more positive outlook on their body image. This movement could be helping media consumers increase their body satisfaction. According to Cwynar-Horta (2016), *the body positivity movement* wants to “address unrealistic ideals about beauty, promote self-acceptance, and build self-esteem through improving one's self-image and learning to love oneself to the fullest” (p. 36). Marketing and advertising campaigns have taken notice of this movement; for example, Aerie, a lingerie company, started their “Aerie Real” campaign in 2014. The “Aerie Real” campaign was started to promote “real” bodies; the company stopped airbrushing their models and chose women with more realistic body types to represent their brand. The clothing brand also encouraged women to take photos of themselves wearing the lingerie and use the hashtag #aeriereal to further promote their body inclusive campaign (Ell, 2018). After Aerie’s campaign, many campaigns from other brands tried to follow the body positivity movement. One brand that did not follow this movement was Victoria’s Secret. The popular lingerie brand received criticism for not including more body diversity (Ell, 2018); this shows that some media campaigns continue to promote unrealistic images.

The movement into a body positivity mindset has been around for a while, but only recently have we seen research addressing the topic. A study by Rubinsky, Hosek, and Hudak

(2018) asked college aged women about memorable messages they may have received during childhood about their body. From their participants, 40% said that the message came from their mother, followed by 20% who said the message came from peers but not friends of the participant. When looking for themes in the memorable messages, the researchers found that 43% were body size comments (being skinny or fat). Surprisingly, around 12% of participants said they received body positivity messages such as “mom always made sure that we felt beautiful for being just the way we were” (p. 6). Rubinsky and colleagues’ study uncovered how memorable message research is starting to show body positivity messages. From Rubinsky et al. study, I speculate that there are more positive body image messages people are now starting to receive, recall and be impacted by messages addressing body positivity.

The trend of body diversity and positivity is gaining more support, but there is still a lack of empirical research on the subject. This study is interested to see if messages concerning body image are changing from negative (body dissatisfaction, eating disorders) to positive (body acceptance, body positivity). By examining memorable messages about body image, this study hopes to explore what types of messages are being delivered and how they impact college-aged individuals.

### **Source’s and Channel’s Impact on Body Image Messages**

There is a range of sources that can have an affect how an individual evaluates their body image. As discussed previously, the ideal body type looks different across genders. Boys get more messages about being muscular and fit, while girls get messages to lose weight and to be thin (Ata, Ludden, & Lally 2007). In a study by Ata and colleagues (2007), they found that adolescents receive teasing about weight from both parents and peers. However, there was a higher reporting of parents teasing about weight than peers in both males and females. Ata et al.

conducted an eating attitudes test (EAT) and found that those who reported teasing from parents and peers scored higher on the EAT compared to those who did not receive teasing; the higher an EAT score is the more likely it is for the individual to have an eating problem. It was also found that males and females who have lower parental support are at a higher risk of having an eating disorder compared to individuals who have high parental support (Ata et al., 2007). Ata and colleagues' study showed that negative messages of teasing can impact an individual's self-esteem and by having parental support they are less likely to develop an eating disorder.

Parents, peers, and the media have been shown to influence the way adolescents evaluate their body image (McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2003). McCabe and Ricciardelli examined peers, parents and media as sociocultural factors that contribute to an adolescent's body image; the study also examined actions that adolescents may take in order to change their body image. It was found that parents delivered messages that led boys and girls to extreme body changing strategies, more than did peers and the media. McCabe and Ricciardelli suggested future research question the content of the messages that the parents are sending to see what is causing them to be influential.

Parents and peers are not the only sources that participants are impacted by. The impact and reach that social media influencers and celebrities have is large. The popular channel Instagram is a social media site that allows for photo and video sharing and it has over 1 billion users (West, 2019). SMIs and celebrities who use Instagram can have a large following; for example, popular British beauty blogger Zoella has 9.6 million followers on the site. Actress Jennifer Aniston broke the platform when she created an account, breaking the world record for reaching 1 million followers in just over 5 hours of creation (Lang, 2019); the actress has 19.3

million followers as of November 2019. This channel, with its large consumer base and variety of sources, has the ability to deliver memorable messages.

Celebrities and SMIs present a particular lifestyle on Instagram; they present a picturesque lifestyle of luxury, fitness and adoring fans. Images on Instagram or Facebook give an opportunity for fans to look at the individual's personal life. Featherstone (2010) notes how "images invite comparisons: reinforcing who we are not and who we would like to be" (p. 197). In a consumer society, comparison is what drives many people to not only see these images but then take action. For example, celebrity/SMI Kylie Jenner got a lot of media attention in 2015 for her change in appearance. Jenner is the youngest sister of the Kardashian/Jenner family; many people who follow the reality tv show "Keeping up with the Kardashians" saw the young girl grow up on TV. Jenner was barely 18 years old when the paparazzi and tabloids accused her of receiving cosmetic surgery for her lips. Jenner claimed she did not receive any lip enhancements but rather she used strategic makeup application by overdrawing her lips for a fuller effect. Fans of Jenner wanted to recreate her look and a non-surgical option became a popular trend on the internet, #kylielipchallenge. Fans would insert their lips into a shot glass and suck out the air, causing suction. This action supposedly gives its users full plump lips. What fans actually got were doctor visits and bruised lips (Mulshine, 2019). While Kylie Jenner was not the creator of the challenge, she was the inspiration that started the trend; through the use of social media, the public went to great lengths to look like their favorite celebrity. This example shows that SMIs have an impact on the actions of their consumers. This shows that the messages SMIs deliver must be memorable in some way to their audience.

People can receive body image messages from parents, peers, celebrities and SMIs; body image messages can come through face-to-face or social media channels. These different sources

and channels may have an effect on the reception of these messages. Memorable message research has studied body image and the impact that these messages can have. There is evidence showing that there are positive memorable messages in body image research (Rubinsky et.al., 2018). This study seeks to find if there are memorable messages on body positivity. The current study aims to further memorable message research on body image by examining who the source is and through what channel the message is received. This study seeks to examine if source and/or channel has an impact on participants' body image.

To measure the impact the memorable message can have on an individual, this study will use measures that are commonly found in memorable message and body image research. The first measure this study will use is the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RES). Self-esteem is the self-respect and confidence that an individual possesses about themselves. In body image research, self-esteem has been a measure consistently used because it can be assessed at any age and has no gender biases (Mellor, Fuller-Tyszkiewicz, McCabe, & Ricciardelli, 2010). Body image has been known to be an important aspect of an individual's self-esteem (Allgood-Merten, Lewinsohn, & Hops, 1990).

The second measure this study will use is the Body Appreciation Scale (BAS) (Avalos, Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2005). Since this study will be asking participants for memorable messages that impacted their body image, a measure addressing their body image would be needed. Body image is an individual's overall perception of how they feel about their body; often compared to societal values. Avalos and colleagues created this measure as a way to evaluate a participant's positive opinion of their own body without referencing specifically to their actual appearance. Past measures have focused on woman's body image, but BAS does not have gender specific language.



## Present Study

### Memorable Message Sources

Memorable messages are messages that an individual has remembered for an extended amount of time which has had an impact on their life (Knapp, et al., 1981). Memorable messages typically come from someone of higher standing than the individual (Stohl, 1986). The source of a message is important to look at because depending on who the source is, the message content and impact can be different (Dunleavy & Yang, 2015). Some studies identify sources as parents, bosses or peers. However, in a number of studies, researchers have asked participants to recall a memorable message received by a specific source. An example is when researchers identify parents as the source of the memorable message (Kellas, 2010; Waldron, et al., 2014).

Sources that memorable message research has yet to acknowledge are celebrities and social media influencers. Celebrities display a lifestyle that the public seeks to emulate (Cashmore, 2006). SMIs are a new type of celebrity, influencing their consumers in a way different from a traditional celebrity. SMIs affect different aspects of consumerism from travel (Magno & Cassia, 2018) to fashion (Sudha & Sheena, 2017). From PewDiePie, who impacted a gaming website's user usage by millions to Kylie Jenner, whose fans started the #kyliejennerlipchallenge that resulted in hospital visits, SMIs are having an impact on their consumers. SMIs produce many messages and have the potential to be sources of memorable messages. This study is seeking to identify if SMIs are delivering memorable messages.

RQ1: Who do participants identify as the source of their memorable messages about body image?

RQ2: Will SMI and celebrities be a source of memorable messages?

## **Memorable Message Channels**

Memorable messages are received through channels. A channel is what people use to deliver messages and has often been overlooked as a contributing factor to memorable message impact. It has been found that many memorable messages get delivered through face-to-face interactions (Stohl, 1986). Researchers often ask or prompt participants to recall who the source of their memorable message is from, but often do not address the channel the sources may have used.

The source can play a role in determining which channel is used to deliver the message. For example, we can assume that most messages from parents would come from face-to-face interactions. Face-to-face interactions happen in daily life. Young adults go to school and interact with their peers; some have jobs that require face-to-face interactions as well. However, peers (and occasionally parents) have the ability to send messages not just through face-to-face interactions but through social media channels as well. However, social media has yet to be specifically examined as a channel that memorable messages are received through. Social media is a set of channels that has grown in popularity. This study wants to introduce social media as a channel that memorable messages can be delivered and received through. As mentioned previously, SMIs will be examined as source participants receive messages from. It can be assumed that SMIs deliver messages through social media channels since that is the platform they are connected to.

RQ3: What channel are participants receiving their memorable messages about body image through?

H1: Messages from SMI and celebrities will be received through social media sites.

I have discussed the likelihood of SMIs sending messages through social media, but they are not the only sources who can deliver messages through that channel. Social media sites are

not just for SMIs, but for the average person as well. Parents and peers have the ability to interact on social media. However, when it is more accessible to have face-to-face interactions, it is likely that social media may not be the first channel used. Face-to-face communication is often used in daily life activities such as work, school, and other social gatherings. It seems that individuals may engage in more face-to-face communication when interacting with people they know. Since memorable message research has yet to identify the channels that memorable messages come through, it would be logical to ask which channel is used most often by people that individuals know.

RQ4: What channel, social media or face-to-face, do sources other than SMIs and celebrities use to deliver their memorable messages?

### **Memorable Messages about Body Image**

Researchers examining memorable messages have often prompted participants to recall the specific topic they would like the memorable message to be about. Body image is a topic that has been discussed in memorable message research (Dunleavy & Yang, 2015; Rubinsky, et al., 2018). Research that surrounds body image often focuses on the negative aspects, for example eating disorders and body dissatisfaction (Barker & Galambos, 2003; Eisenberg, et al., 2011). The media and social media further perpetuate these unhealthy and negative ideas, from commercials promoting the images of unrealistically thin Victoria Secret models (Ell, 2018) to websites dedicated to encouraging an individual's eating disorder (Peebles et al., 2012). However, in recent years, there has been a shift in perspective; body positivity is a trend that the media has started to support. Many fashion companies have started running campaigns and advertisements promoting body diversity, and body positivity (Ell, 2018).

The shift in perspective, from negative to positive, has happened in the last decade therefore not many empirical studies have been done to reflect the change in media. One body image study uncovered positive messages individuals have received that helped them to have a more positive body image (Wood-Barcalow et al., 2010). From that study it could be assumed that the messages given were memorable in some way. The present study still expects to find negative messages being delivered in the media and by parents or peers about an individual's body image. Due to the rising awareness in the media about body positivity, this study proposes that some participants may also recall positive memorable messages about their body image.

RQ5: What memorable messages do participants recall about body image?

H2: There will be memorable messages that address body positivity.

### **Memorable Message Impact**

An individual's memorable message can have a positive, negative or neutral impact (Knapp, et al., 1981; Kauffman, et al., 2013). When children were teased by their parents and peers, they began to engage in extreme body changing strategies (McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2003). When medical professionals deliver breast cancer messages, individuals are more likely to engage in breast cancer detection behaviors (Smith, et al., 2009). It was also found that memorable messages about sex from familial sources had an impact on the participants current sexual behaviors (Kauffman, et al., 2013). SMIs have yet to be sources of memorable messages, but there has been evidence of SMIs having an impact on their followers. For example, fans of Kylie Jenner decided to engage in extreme actions to alter their appearance to more closely resemble hers (Mulshine, 2019). There has also been evidence to support that interacting with eating disorder websites can result in extreme eating disorder habits (Peebles et al., 2012),

meaning that even sources that individual may not know personally can give an impactful memorable message.

RQ6: Do individuals recall different sources (people individuals know vs. people individuals do not know) having different perceived effects on their (a) self-esteem and (b) body appreciation?

There is a difference in receiving a message through social media versus in face-to-face interactions. Social media channels (Instagram/YouTube) can hold messages and content on their sites until the site no longer exists or until the creator decides to delete them; a message delivered through this channel can last a long time. Since these messages have the ability to last on this channel, if a person wants to recall and read a particular message again, they have the ability to do so. If a memorable message is delivered through this channel, it is likely that the individual will still have a clear recollection of what the message is. When a message is delivered through face-to-face communication, an individual is left with just a memory of the conversation. Unlike social media channels, there is no way to go back to a message that has been delivered face-to-face. Being able to go back to the message, where an individual could feel the same emotions they first felt, as well as repeat the message over and over, gives the message more accessibility. The more accessible the recollection of the message is, the more it could continue to impact the individual.

H3: Individuals who received messages through social media will recall a greater perceived effect on their (a) self-esteem and (b) body appreciation than messages received through face-to-face.

As mentioned previously, there has been a shift in perspective surrounding body image. A few marketing campaigns have embraced the idea of body positivity and are encouraging the

public to do the same. Much of the body positivity research focuses on how to help others adopt this mindset, and not how it impacts an individual. According to researchers, for individuals to adopt a body positivity mindset, they need to recognize all the negative messages and reject them (Wood-Barcalow et al., 2010). However, with the limited amount of empirical research there is on body positivity messages, it is hard to determine if positive messages can have a lasting impact on an individual.

Research has supported the idea that women favor a thin body type (Martin, 2010) and men favor a muscular body type (Ridgeway & Tylka, 2005). When individuals cannot achieve the ideal body, it leads to negative attitudes about their own body image (Karazsia et al., 2017). Research has also shown that individuals who receive these negative body image messages interacted on proED websites, body changing strategies, eating disorders and more. It seems possible that the number of negative messages still outweigh the positive. Negative messages are still being produced and without the information to accept a body positivity mindset, young adults may continue to accept and be impacted by negative messages.

RQ7: Does the overall valance of a memorable message about body image have an association with participants recalled effects on their (a) self-esteem and (b) body appreciation?

## CHAPTER 2. METHOD

### Participants

Participants consisted of undergraduate students from the University of Hawaii at Manoa, recruited using the Communicology departments research site SONA. The final sample (N = 113) consisted of 23 males (20.4%) and 90 (79.6%) females; the ages ranged from 17 to 43, with the mean age being 19.47 ( $SD = 3.23$ ). To look at demographics, the prompt asked participants to select all the ethnicities that applied. A majority of the participants selected Asian (64.6%), followed by White (38.9%), Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (15%), Hispanic (13.3%), American Indian/Alaska Native (2.7%) and Black/African American (1.8%). Only 3.5% of participants indicated “other”.

### Procedure

All information gathered from participants was through the website Qualtrics and no in-person meetings were required. Participation in this study was voluntary and consent forms were collected before the start of the study. The study took participants approximately 30 minutes to complete.

This study started by asking participants to recall a memorable message given to them about their body. Participants were told: “*Memorable messages are verbal message which may be remembered for extremely long periods of time in which people perceive as a major influence on the course of their lives. In the space below, please provide an example of a memorable message you have received that has impacted your body image the most.*” Two memorable message examples were provided “*One example of a memorable message is: My ex-boyfriend told me to ‘watch out’ I don’t want to end up like my friends who gained 50lb after they graduated from high school.*” as well as “*Another example of a memorable message is: Hearing*

*the singer Lizzo say 'I'm not ashamed of my body and neither should you' made me realize my body should be something I'm proud of."* Participants were given a space to type out their answer.

After participants provided their memorable message, from their responses, a series of follow up questions were asked. Of all participants who took the survey ( $n = 144$ ),  $n = 113$  were kept for final analysis. When examining the data there were three different reasons for excluding cases: 14 participants did not provide a memorable message; 11 participants were excluded for incomplete surveys; and 8 participants were excluded for providing memorable messages that did not pertain to their body image.

## **Measures**

Participants were given a series of multiple-choice and Likert scale questions about their memorable message. The first question asked who they received their message from. The choices participants could choose from was family members, friends/peers, SMI, celebrities, and other; if participants chose other, a text box was there to fill in their response. The second question addressed through what channel participants received their message. The options were face-to-face, social media, phone, email, text and other. If the participants chose social media as their channel, a follow up question asked the participants "*How often did you go back to the message on social media, after receiving it?*" The options given were not at all, 1-5 times, 5-10 times and more than 10 times. The last question will ask participants, "*How negative or positive do you feel your memorable message was?*" Participants responded on a Likert scale ranging from (-7) *Extremely Negative* to (7) *Extremely Positive*. Following these questions, participants filled in a self-esteem and body appreciation questionnaire.



**Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE)** To measure if participants recalled their self-esteem being influenced by the memorable message, a modified version of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE) (Rosenberg, 1965) was used. The RSE scale was modified to measure the change in self-esteem of the participant to see if the message had an influence on the individual. Participants were asked to recall how the message changed their self-esteem when they first received their memorable message. For example, “Please reflect to how you felt when you FIRST RECEIVED your memorable message.” An example of a question that was asked is “After receiving the message, I had a more positive attitude toward myself.” Participants responded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree. This scale was found reliable, Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .947$ .

**Body Appreciation Scale (BAS)** To measure if participants recalled their body appreciation being influenced by the memorable message, a modified version of the Body Appreciation Scale (BAS) was used (Avalos et. al, 2005). The BAS is a 13-item measure and was initially used to measure women’s body appreciation, but the items showed no gender preference (e.g. My self-worth is independent of my body), thus was used to measure men’s body appreciation as well. Participants were asked to recall how they felt when they first received their memorable message. For example, “After receiving the message, despite my body’s flaws, I felt more accepting of my body for what it is.” These items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale from (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree. This scale was found reliable, Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .958$ .

### CHAPTER 3. RESULTS

The first research question (RQ1) asked who participants identify as the source of their memorable message. To answer this question, frequencies were examined to look at how many times each source occurred ( $n = 113$ ) it was found that friends or peers was the most frequent source (43%), followed by familial relation (35%), social media influencers (6.2%), celebrities (4.4%) and other (11.4%). Research question 1 found that friends and or peers were the main source of participants memorable messages. The second research question (RQ2) asks whether SMI and celebrities will be sources of the memorable message. Using the analysis from RQ1, it was shown that SMI and celebrities were found to be sources of memorable messages (10.6%).

The third research question (RQ3) asked what channels are being used to receive the messages. To answer this question, frequencies were examined; it was found that of the choices the most frequent channel was face-to-face (83.2%), followed by social media (10.6%), text messages (2.7%); written (2.7%) and movie (.9%) made up the remaining answers. These results show that most memorable messages were received face-to-face. To test the first hypothesis (H1), I ran a cross tabulations to see if the messages delivered from SMI and celebrities would be delivered through social media sites. Out of the participants that chose SMI and celebrities ( $n = 12$ ), 10 participants said that they received the memorable message through social media. The other two participants said that they received the memorable message through face-to-face and through a movie. I ran a chi-squared test and found that difference between the channels used was statistically significant ( $\chi^2(2, n = 12) = 13.50, p = .001$ ). Thus, hypothesis 1 is supported.

The fourth research question (RQ4) asked which channel, face-to-face or social media, do sources other than SMI or celebrities deliver their messages through. To answer this question, I first separated the data into people participants know (parents, peers, significant others) versus

people participants do not know (celebrities, SMI, strangers). Next I ran a chi-squared test. It was found that the difference between face-to-face and social media was statistically significant ( $\chi^2(2, n = 113) = 62.43, p < .001$ ). Participants who received a memorable message from someone they know chose face-to-face as their channel more so than social media.

The fifth research question (RQ5) asked about the content of the memorable messages. The messages were coded by two researchers, intercoder reliability was calculated using Cohen's kappa. While coding for themes, there are main themes and sub themes; if a sub theme was present then it was coded that the main theme was present as well. Thus, I only calculated the kappa scores for the main message themes. The reliabilities for each main theme are reported in Table 1. When the two researchers did not initially agree with the theme of a particular message, they each presented an argument as to why one theme fit over another. After thorough discussions, both coders came to a mutually agreed upon final coding. Through this process of discussion, new sub-categories arose; all messages were then reevaluated to ensure that the best theme/sub-category was coded for each message.

In the coding process, there were seven different themes that arose; within these themes, some contained sub-categories. A memorable message could be coded as having more than one theme. The frequencies of each theme can be seen on Table 1. As explained next, the categories are *health*, *appearance*, *weight*, *warnings*, *body's ability*, *encouragement* and *fitness*.

The first theme was *health*. The sub-categories in this theme included eating habits, healthier habits, health issues and mental health issues. Messages that were coded as health addressed the relationship between a participant's body or body image with their overall well-being. One participant wrote of their experience at the doctors, stating:

I went to my doctor's for a check-up. They took my measurements, like height, weight, and blood pressure. After taking my measurements my doctor told me that I was considered

obese and this was very shocking. It made me realize that I need to take better care of my body before I start getting health-related issues.

The second theme was *appearance*. The sub-categories in this theme were compliments, face, body size, body shape and comparing. One participant recalled a family member's reaction to their appearance, stating, "My mom and my sister noticed the stretch marks that began to develop on my legs and mentioned them to me and said they didn't have any at my age."

Another participant wrote, "My parents have said 'I look great' and that sticks with me because their opinion is important to me."

The third theme was *weight*. The sub-categories in this theme were weight gain, and weight loss. Many times, participants recalled messages when other people drew attention to their weight such as, "I used to be friends with a boy that would always comment about what I ate and my weight. This made me feel self-conscious about eating around him and made me feel bad about my body." However, there were times when messages explicitly addressed weight loss; one participant wrote:

... I remember in high school that I had gotten up to almost 240 pounds in weight and after some self-reflection I decided to start to work on my body weight. After about 6-9 months of struggling I got down to 180 and just amount of people family included that were letting me know that they were happy I wasn't fat anymore really shocked me. I can realize that they were probably just happy about my efforts working out well for me but I guess deep down it causes me to feel like they weren't happy or didn't like me as much when I was fatter. I just remember seeing and hearing the surprise that I received from my extended family when they saw my skinny self for the first time...

The fourth theme was *warnings*. The sub-categories in this theme were "freshman 15", and the warning of potential weight gain. Many of the participants, because they are college aged students, were warned about the cliché phrase "freshman 15"; this phrase represents the number

of pounds college students stereotypically gain in their first year at school. One participant wrote “The cliché phrase of the ‘freshman 15’ made me rethink a lot of my food choices which lead me to not want to eat in some occasions.” Another participant wrote “Before I left for college my coaches all said, ‘you’ve been small since we’ve known you, but that freshman 15 is coming!’”

The fifth theme was *body’s abilities*. The only sub-category in this theme was strength. These messages highlighted what an individual’s body was capable of. One participant recalled the message: “Your body has done incredible things.” Another participant recalled a message addressing their strength; they wrote:

I’m not a particularly plus or petite-sized girl. I have fat, but I also have muscle. I have been physically trained hard all throughout my life and have gained much muscle mass from so, but I continue to struggle with my body fat. For long, people around me had made me feel insecure about my body image, making me believe that I was plain and simple: fat. It wasn’t until the summer going into my freshman year when I attended a high school dance camp with my team, that I had finally felt appreciative of my body. All it took was for a camp instructor to notice me in a large crowd and for her to state, “Wow. You have incredible legs!” Other instructors and peers looked toward me and I felt so much love in room full of strangers.

The sixth theme was *encouragement*. The only sub-category in this theme was self-acceptance. Messages that were coded as encouragement reinforced external self-concepts and promoted positive affirmation of self. Additionally, messages in this theme often promoted the acceptance of one’s own body. An example of a messages that was only coded as encouragement (but not self-acceptance) was, “From the infamous movie with Mark Wahlberg, ‘No pain no gain baby!’ has been a memorable message that pushed me to get my first gym membership.” An example that included the subtheme self-acceptance was, “My ex-boyfriend had told me that I

look pretty with or without any make-ups. Those words of reassurance made me feel comfortable about myself” Another participant recalled hearing encouraging words from a web series; they wrote:

The memorable message was from Jameela Jamil's "I Weigh" campaign, in which women state facts concerning their character. Examples include "I Weigh... A good sense of humor, empathy, big sister, etc." Jameela Jamil herself is not very important to me, but seeing the campaign on Instagram made me realize I am made up of much more than just numbers on a scale.

The seventh and final theme was *fitness*. This theme included no sub-categories. The theme of fitness ranged from people being told to workout, such as, “My brother asked me to go running with him and I said no because I wasn't feeling like it. He then told me, ‘you really should. You're getting really fat’”, to complimenting on an individual’s fitness, such as, “My friend I hadn't seen in a while said something like ‘dang you’re swole’ when I didn’t really think so.”

The second hypothesis (H2) suggested that there will be messages concerning body positivity. Participants were asked to rate on a scale from -7 to 7 how negative or positive they felt the memorable message was. Only 4 participants (3.5%) answered ‘0 Neutral’. Overall, according to participants, there was 57 (49.6%) positive messages (message scores from 1 to 7) and 54 (46.9%) negative messages (message scores from -1 to -7).

Researchers first coded for valence of the messages, then a separate coding for body positivity. In this study, I looked to past researchers who have coded messages “as positive or negative when explicit comments of an evaluative nature were used” (Orbe et al., 2014, p. 290). Researchers used this as a guide to code the valence of the memorable messages as either *positive*, *negative*, or *neither positive nor negative*. Cohen’s Kappa was calculated to test the

agreement of the two coders; reliabilities are reported in Table 2. An example of a *negatively framed* message was, “My mom told me my body looked ugly and not lady-like after I started weight-lifting.” In this message, the source was expressing an explicitly negative perception of the individual. An example of a *positively framed* message is, “My parents have said ‘I look great’ and that sticks with me because their opinion is important to me.” In this message the source was expressing an explicitly positive perception of the individual. An example of a message that is *neither negative nor positive* is, “From the infamous movie with Mark Wahlberg, ‘No pain no gain baby!’ has been a memorable message that pushed me to get my first gym membership.” This message is not directed to the individual nor does the message have explicit negative nor positive perceptions. From the coding process it was found that 48 (42.5%) of the messages were negative, 39 (34.5%) of the messages were positive and 26 (23%) were neither negative nor positive.

Next, a separate coding was done to find themes of body positivity within the message. Again, by looking at past research, messages containing body positivity are defined as “encourage[ing] participants to like or value their body” (Rubinsky et al., 2018, p. 5). Researchers used this as a guide to code the memorable messages. Cohen’s Kappa was calculated to test the agreement of both coders; reliabilities are reported in Table 2. An example of a message that showed *body positivity* is,

I've always wanted to wear a bikini to the beach, yet felt that I didn't have the body type to do so. Finally gained the confidence when my friend said “Don't worry about it! We all feel the same way about ourselves. But that's only from our own perspectives.”

From the coding process it was found that 27 messages (23.9%) contained body positivity but 86 messages (76.1%) did not. The 95% confidence interval (CI) for the proportion of messages containing body positivity is estimated at [.16, .32]. This CI suggests that with repeated sampling

the proportion of messages containing body positivity is unlikely to fall below 0. This suggests that the appearance of body positivity is significantly different from 0 and that there are body positivity messages found. Thus, hypothesis 2 is supported.

Finally, research questions six and seven (RQ6, RQ7), as well as the third hypothesis (H3) involved examining self-esteem and body appreciation scores. RQ6 asked if different sources differed in their perceived effects on participants (a) self-esteem and (b) body image. A *t*-test comparing the means of the participants' self-esteem score (RES) by "people participants know" ( $M = 30.25, SD = 3.09$ ) and "people participants don't know" ( $M = 29.53, SD = 3.44$ ) showed that the difference between the groups were not statistically significant ( $t(111) = .972, p = .60$ ). Thus, there was no difference between source groups. . A *t*-test comparing the means of the participants body appreciation score (BAS) by "people participants know" ( $M = 3.01, SD = 1.01$ ) and "people participants don't know" ( $M = 3.87, SD = .74$ ) found that the difference between the groups was statistically significant ( $t(111) = 3.576, p = .02$ ). Thus, RQ6(b) found that participants recalled perceiving their body appreciation more positively after receiving memorable messages from people they did not know compared to than people participants knew.

The third hypothesis (H3) suggested that participants who received messages through social media will recall a greater perceived effect on their (a) self-esteem and (b) body appreciation than participants who received messages face-to-face. A *t*-test comparing the means of participants self-esteem scores by face-to-face ( $M = 29.53, SD = 3.47$ ) and social media ( $M = 30.33, SD = 2.87$ ) channels found that the difference between the channels was not statistically significant ( $t(104) = -.765, p = .43$ ). H3(a) was not supported. However, a *t*-test comparing the means of the BAS scores for face-to-face ( $M = 2.98, SD = .99$ ) and social media ( $M = 4.21, SD = .48$ ) channels found the difference between the groups to be statistically significant ( $t(104) = -$



4.201,  $p = .003$ ). H3(b) was supported, showing that participants who received messages through social media perceived more positive effects on their body appreciation than people who received messages received through face-to-face. Thus, H3 is partially supported.

The final research question (RQ7) asked if the overall valence of a message had an association with participants' recalled effects on their (a) self-esteem and (b) body appreciation. For RQ7(a) a correlation test was run, examining the relationship between the perceived positive/negative evaluation of the message ( $M = 0.81$ ,  $SD = 5.24$ ) and the RES ( $M = 29.68$ ,  $SD = 3.38$ ) score; there was no significant association found ( $r(111) = .105$ ,  $p = .270$ ). Another correlation test was done to examine the relationship between the perceived positive/negative evaluation of the message ( $M = .81$ ,  $SD = 5.24$ ) and the BAS ( $M = 3.16$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ ) score; significant association was found ( $r(111) = .793$ ,  $p < .001$ ). RQ7(b) was supported, showing that the perceived evaluation of the message had an association with the participants' recalled effects on body appreciation.

## CHAPTER 4. DISCUSSION

My study was designed to understand the concept of memorable messages and the perceived effects that messages can have on an individual's body image depending on who gave the message, which channel the message was received through and the content of the message. This study furthered scholarship on memorable messages in three major ways: by showing that messages can be received from people unknown to the individual, showing that social media is a channel individual's receive memorable messages through, and showing that participants reported the content of the memorable messages as having a positive effect on their individual body appreciation, which also adds support to body positivity research. Additionally, my results suggest that social media and SMI/ celebrities can have a positive influence on their audience.

### **Source**

The first area that this study has extended research on was the source of the memorable message. One finding from this study was that participants most often identified friends and peers as the source of their memorable messages; following friends and peers was a familial source. Past research has claimed that memorable messages are commonly from someone who is higher ranking or someone who has more life experience in a particular topic (Stohl, 1986). This past finding seemed to apply to sources who gave messages about the "freshman 15"; one participant reported the source was a friend who had graduated a year ahead and talked about the inevitability of the "freshman 15". Other participants reported the messages coming from family and coaches, whom we can assume had more life experience on the topic. However, many participants reported the messages were from peers/friends. It was not evident from the messages themselves if these friends were of a higher status than the participants or not.

Dunleavy and Yang (2010) found that when participants are in college, their social group membership (sororities, teammates, college friends) dictated who the individuals found influential in delivering memorable messages. Those researchers reported that peers within the social group were recalled as memorable message sources, which aligns more with the findings of this study. From the current study, it can be concluded that peers within the participants' college social groups seem to have an influence on participant's body image. "Familial relation" was the second most common source that participants reported; prior literature often finds family relations as the sources of memorable messages (e.g., Jackl, 2016; Thompson & Zaitchik, 2012). Many participants recalled the source to be their mother. Kellas (2010) found that daughters recalled memorable messages about romantic relationships from their mothers; researchers discussed how the mother-daughter relationship is significant when passing down lessons and values. Additionally, this study shows that mothers are an influential source not only for messages about romantic relationships but for messages about their daughters' body image too.

Participants' responses showed that messages were most often received from people the participants knew. However, there were participants who identified SMIs and celebrities as the source of their memorable message. Research has not previously shown SMIs and celebrities to be sources of memorable messages, so this is a major finding from this study. Research in the social media field found that consumers turn to SMIs because they feel a sense of authenticity from their content (Marwick, 2015). When a SMI displays their authenticity online, media consumers may be able to find them relatable and trustworthy; consumers start to view them more as a friend and less as a celebrity. One reason for finding SMIs and celebrities as sources could be because the participants feel as if they actually do know these people; this parasocial relationship (Daniel Jr, Crawford Jackson, & Westerman, 2018) may allow celebrities and SMIs

to be influential in delivering memorable messages. From this study it was found that all participants who identified a SMI or celebrity as their source also self-reported their message to be positive. This finding suggests that SMIs may be reinforcing positive body image.

This study also examined participants memorable message and how their perceived effects on self-esteem and body appreciation differed by the source of their message; this study compared the sources that participants knew against the sources that the participants did not know. Surprisingly, the results showed that participants' self-esteem score was not related to the source of the message. However, participants' body appreciation score differed more by people that the participants did not know more so than people participants knew. The results show that participants were more appreciative of their bodies after receiving the memorable message from SMIs and celebrities than they were after receiving the message from a family member/peer. It should also be noted that the channel and valance of the message could be confounding factors in this finding; this is discussed in more detail below. These results further support the idea that SMIs and celebrities can have an influence on their followers, and more specifically their followers' body image.

### **Channel**

As stated previously, much of the existing memorable message research does not focus on the messages' channel. This study wanted to explore which channel participants received their memorable message through. A majority of participants reported face-to-face as the channel that they received their memorable message through. While past research has not explicitly stated that these messages came through face-to-face, the topic in discussion often leaves readers to assume face-to-face was the means of communication (e.g., Keeley, 2014; Waldron et al, 2014). This study provides empirical evidence that participants received their memorable messages

through face-to-face conversations; no assumptions were made. Social media was the second most common channel that participants received their memorable message through. In correspondence with hypothesizing that SMIs and celebrities would be sources of memorable messages, I also hypothesized that SMIs and celebrities would deliver these messages through social media. The hypothesis was supported; my results show that participants reported receiving memorable messages from SMIs and celebrities through social media sites. Finding that participants were receiving messages from SMIs and celebrities through social media was to be expected because the majority of their content resides on social media sites.

This study also addressed which channel, face-to-face or social media, was used more by sources that participants knew. It was found that of the sources participants knew, face-to-face was the most common channel. For messages from sources participants knew, there could be many reasons as to why face-to-face was the channel of choice. One reason why face-to-face may be the most often used channel is because participants are in situations that potentially could not happen over social media. For example, participants reported receiving messages while trying on bathing suits, during a meal, confiding in a friend for advice, and seeing extended family; a majority of these situations could not take place on social media. Another reason why face-to-face was used more than social media could be because individuals spend the majority of their time in face-to-face environments rather than in a digital environment. Therefore, there are more chances for face-to-face to be the main channel used in receiving memorable messages.

Additionally, depending which social media site and individual is on, it is likely that there is a “feed” or continuous stream of information being shown. Although continuous, messages on social media are viewed one at a time and the process of receiving these messages may be slower than when receiving messages face-to-face. Due to people processing and receiving information

more quickly during face-to-face interactions, there may be more opportunities for memorable messages to be had.

Finally, I hypothesized that messages delivered through social media would have a greater perceived effect on participants' self-esteem and body appreciation than messages delivered face-to-face. There were no differences in the perceived effects between messages received through social media compared to the messages received through face-to-face. However, it was found that participants' body appreciation scores differed by channel. When messages were received through social media, participants' body appreciation scores were higher, meaning participants had a more positive outlook on their body, than when they received messages face-to-face. All the participants who identified social media as their channel also self-reported their messages to be positive. These findings show that social media and social media influencers may be having a positive influence on their consumers. One explanation as to why participants' body appreciation score differed by channel could be due to the *body positivity movement* (Cwynar-Horta, 2016). This movement has helped spread the idea of body positivity through media and social media; as a result of this movement, there could be more positive messages than negative messages on these sites.

Another explanation as to why messages received through social media had a greater perceived effect on participants' body appreciation more than messages received face-to-face is because of the visual element that social media sites offer (i.e. Instagram/YouTube). It seemed to be more than just the words that participants recalled being influential. For one participant, viewing a celebrity's untouched photo along with the celebrity's comment praising the photo made the message memorable. Instagram has been shown to create a community online and has shown to foster virtual social relationships (Serafinelli, 2017). Perhaps these new virtual social

relationships, the visual element, and people that are of higher status (Stohl, 1986) could all be reasons as to why participants' body appreciation was affected more by messages delivered through social media than face-to-face.

### **Memorable Messages' Content and Self-Reported Impact**

Participants offered unique stories and messages that they have received that impacted their body image. While analyzing the content of the messages, there were seven themes that arose: health, appearance, weight, warning, body's ability, encouragement and fitness. Within these main themes there were a number of sub-categories as well. It was found that the most frequent main theme was appearance. Within the theme appearance, the sub-categories that were most frequent were body size, compliment, body shape, face and comparing. Not surprisingly, the sub-themes within appearance are highly researched topics in body image scholarship. Messages recorded from participants generally aligned with the Western ideology of body size: thin for women (Martin, 2010) and muscularity for men (Ridgeway & Tylka, 2005). Many of the participants discussed the size of their bodies in comparison to others and overall comments about their facial appearance. The second most common theme was encouragement; messages that had this theme had an overall positive frame that allowed the individual to take pride in and have a more positive outlook on their body.

Another hypothesis from this study was that there would be memorable messages addressing body positivity. While the majority of the messages did not contain body positivity, there were many memorable messages that did contain body positivity. Past memorable message research has shown positive body image messages (Rubinsky et al., 2018) and the findings from this study continue to show participants are receiving memorable messages addressing body positivity.

However, there were also a number of positive messages that did not get coded as body positive. Messages that were coded as being body positive had the participants' source encouraging the participant to like and value their body. Messages like "dang, you're swole", shows a positive attitude to an individual's body but does not explicitly encourage the receiver to like or value their body. As stated earlier, the body positivity movement has shown an increase of positive body messages in the media; marketing campaigns, billboards, spokespersons are all taking part in this movement. With the movements rise to popularity these positive messages may be more easily accessible and thus more reported.

This study used self-esteem as one measure to evaluate the perceived effect the memorable message had on participants. In past research, self-esteem has been a common measure used that tends to have a connection to individual's body image. First, this study compared messages from sources that participants knew versus sources that participants did not know. It was found that participants' self-esteem score did not differ between sources. Secondly, this study compared messages received through channels face-to-face versus social media. It was found that participants' self-esteem scores also did not differ between channels. Thirdly, this study found that the valance of a message was not related to participants' self-esteem score.

One possible reason the participants' perceived effect of the memorable message on their self-esteem did not differ in any situation could be because an individual's self-esteem is not completely dependent on their body image. Self-esteem is a general understanding of ones' own worth and abilities; there are more factors than just body image that could determine a person's self-esteem. Future studies may also want to look into other variables that are connected to an individual's body image other than self-esteem.



Unlike the self-esteem measure, the body appreciation scale is more related to the message content. As noted previously, participants' body appreciation scores differed between sources, participants' body appreciation scores differed between channels, and their body appreciation score was related to the valance of the message. All three of these factors are confounded in the data; it is unclear which factors are contributing to the results. Each question in the BAS addressed how the message affected participants' respect and attitude toward their body. Using measures that are more related to the message's content could provide a better look at the perceived effects the memorable messages had on participants. Future studies may want to use body related measures to better evaluate the memorable message's perceived effect on participants in this context.

Finally, I investigated if the valance of a memorable message would have an association with recalled effects on participants' body appreciation. I found that there was a relationship between participants' perceived valance of the message and their body appreciation score. Specifically, the more negative a message was perceived to be, the more negative the participant's view of their body after receiving the message. This finding supports that negative messages do have a perceived effect on an individual's body image. Past research has shown that with a negative body image, individuals can engage in body damaging behaviors (e.g., Peebles et al., 2012; Voelker, Reel, & Greenleaf, 2015). While this study did not ask about the repercussions of the messages, future studies may want to investigate the behaviors individuals engaged in after receiving their memorable message and how it may have caused negative or positive actions.

## **Limitations and Future Research**

This study has several limitations. One limitation to this study has to do with participants' self-reported data. In many memorable message studies, self-reported data is often reported as a limitation. One reason that self-reported data is an issue is due to participants' memory, which has often been noted as unreliable (Knapp et. al, 1981). While this study acknowledges that the main component to a memorable message is the memory of the message, this study must also take into account that aspects of the message could be remembered incorrectly. Because of this study's focus on source and channel, participants' memory is important. Inaccurate recall of these elements may lead to invalid conclusions about who is delivering memorable messages and through what channel.

Additionally, many of the participants wrote and recalled more information than other participants. A few individuals just wrote the message itself such as, "you're so skinny" with no other context. Other participants wrote out the whole scenario explaining how a similar message had been heard over their lifetime and discussed the many different struggles they had faced trying to gain weight. Without context of the situation, there are different ways the message of "you're so skinny" can be interpreted. For example, one way could be that the participant lost so much weight that someone is complimenting them; it could also be that they look skinny in an unhealthy way. The current coding of these messages may be different than what the participants actually intended; with more context around the messages, researchers could make fewer assumptions about the situation and how the participants felt. Future research could conduct face-to-face interviews. Having an open dialogue with participants may allow them to disclose more information about the effects of the message, as well as the circumstances which made the

message memorable. Researchers can also engage more with the participants in face-to-face conversations, they can ask clarifying or follow up questions.

This study measured the recalled effect the message had on participants by evaluating the change in their self-esteem and body appreciation scores after receiving the memorable message. These self-reports could have been remembered incorrectly or made up because the participant could not recall. Participants may be recalling messages that happened years ago and may not have an accurate recall of how they felt after receiving the message. A different way to assess the affect a message had on participants' self-esteem would be to establish a self-esteem score before and after the participant received the message. Future studies should examine the change in score, which could better determine the effect the message had on the participants' self-esteem.

This study also had a relatively small sample size overall, and specifically in three conditions: participants who reported social media as a channel, participants who reported SMIs/celebrities as a source, and messages coded for body positivity. The findings in these conditions should be interpreted with caution because the sample may not be representative of the population. Future studies should obtain a larger sample size in these specific conditions, with the aim to more accurately represent the population.

Another limitation to this study is the coding for body positivity. I used past studies' definition of body positivity; in my study, there were instances when the messages were positive, but they did not follow the guidelines to be classified as body positivity. In this study, messages that were coded as encouragement were often coded as messages of body positivity. However, messages coded as compliments did not usually fit the definition of body positivity. Future studies may find it beneficial to reevaluate the qualifications of a body positive message and broaden the definition. Future work could ask participants to identify any body positive

memorable messages they have received; doing this could provide different ways in which other people define body positivity. This would give a wider scope for researchers to redefine body positivity.

Another possible limitation to this study was the sample used in collecting data. This study's sample was college students, which provided insight into that specific demographic. One aspect this study was looking at was social media as a channel; it was found that there were individuals who received memorable messages through social media. It has been found that younger adults, ages 18-24, are more likely to use social media than older adults (Smith & Anderson, 2018), but teens are quickly growing in the amount that they use social media (e.g., Anderson & Jiang, 2018; Perrin, 2015). Future research should focus on younger demographics, such as high school or middle school aged students, when examining social media as a channel. Teens and their rising use of social media could provide more insight into how social media and SMI may be delivering influential memorable messages.

## **Conclusion**

This study has added to memorable message research by reinforcing past findings as well as identifying new sources of memorable messages that past research had not identified. Friends and peers were found to be the most common source, reinforcing that college aged students are influenced by their social peer groups. One of the major findings from this study was that SMIs and celebrities were sources of memorable messages and SMIs positively influenced participants body appreciation; this finding supports that SMIs and celebrities have some influence over college aged students. This study demonstrates that sources can be from people that an individual knows, but they can also be from people that an individual has no direct relationship with.

Additionally, this study added to memorable message research by addressing the channels that are used and the relationship between channel and self-reported message impact. This study found that social media is used to receive messages, and messages received through social media had a more positive influence on participants body appreciation. These findings can also contribute to scholarship on social media, showing that people can experience positive effects from messages being received and delivered using social media sites and from SMI. Lastly, this study has added to memorable message and body positivity research by demonstrating that there are positively framed memorable messages about body image. There has not been a lot of research addressing positive body image, but this study was able to identify many positively framed messages. This study shows that college aged students are not only receiving negative memorable messages but positive messages about their body image as well.

**Table 1***Frequencies of Themes Found in Memorable Messages*

Themes and Sub-themes	Cohen's	Frequency	Percentage <sup>b</sup>
	Kappa <sup>a</sup>		
	$\kappa$	$n$	%
Appearance	0.45	76	67.3%
<i>Body Size</i>		33	29.2%
<i>Compliment</i>		17	15.0%
<i>Body Shape</i>		11	9.7%
<i>Face</i>		7	6.2%
<i>Compare</i>		5	4.4%
Health	0.46	24	21.2%
<i>Healthy Habits</i>		13	11.5%
<i>Eating Habits</i>		9	8.0%
<i>Health Issues</i>		4	3.5%
<i>Mental Health</i>		3	2.7%
Weight	0.53	22	19.5%
<i>Weight Gain</i>		6	5.3%
<i>Weight Loss</i>		2	1.8%
Warning	0.90	17	15.0%
<i>Freshman 15</i>		7	6.2%
<i>Warning of Weight Gain</i>		4	3.5%
Body's Ability	0.78	7	6.2%
<i>Strength</i>		3	2.7%
Encouragement	0.52	32	28.3%
<i>Self-Acceptance</i>		18	15.9%
Fitness	0.28	9	8.0%

*Note.* <sup>a</sup> Kappa values were interpreted using Landis & Koch (1977): <0 No agreement, 0 — .20 Slight, .21 — .40 Fair, .41 — .60 Moderate, .61 — .80 Substantial, .81–1.0 Perfect.

<sup>b</sup> Percentages are equal to more than 100% because messages can be coded into more than one theme.

**Table 2***Frequencies of Positive/Negative Messages and Body Positivity*

Coded Messages	Cohen's Kappa <sup>a</sup>	Frequency	Percentage
	$\kappa$	<i>n</i>	%
Valence of message	0.76		
<i>Negative</i>		48	42.5%
<i>Positive</i>		39	34.5%
<i>Neither Neg. nor Pos.</i>		26	23.0%
Body Positivity	0.53		
<i>Not Present</i>		86	76.1%
<i>Present</i>		27	23.9%

*Note. a. Kappa values were interpreted using Landis & Koch (1977): <0 No agreement, 0 — .20 Slight, .21 — .40 Fair, .41 — .60 Moderate, .61 — .80 Substantial, .81–1.0 Perfect.*

## **Appendix A**

### Consent to participate in research

Aloha! My name is Zoe Shimizu and you are invited to take part in a research study. I am a graduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa in the Communicology Department. As part of the requirements for earning my graduate degree, I am doing a research project.

#### ***What am I being asked to do?***

If you participate in this project, you will be asked to recall a memorable message you have received that has impacted your body image, then answer a questionnaire about it.

#### ***Taking part in this study is your choice.***

Your participation in this project is completely voluntary. You may stop participating at any time. If you stop being in the study, there will be no penalty or loss to you. Your choice to participate or not participate will not affect your rights to services at the UH Campus Recreational Facilities.

#### ***Why is this study being done?***

The purpose of my project is to understand more about the types of messages students are receiving that impact their body image. I am asking you to participate because you are a university student.

#### ***What will happen if I decide to take part in this study?***

The survey will consist of multiple choice and open-ended questions. It will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. The survey questions will include questions like, "Who was the source of your memorable message?" and "After receiving the message, I felt better about my body."

The survey is accessed on a website to which I will provide you a link.



***What are the risks and benefits of taking part in this study?***

I believe there is little risk to you for participating in this research project. You may become stressed or uncomfortable answering any of the survey questions. If you do become stressed or uncomfortable, you can skip the question or take a break. You can also stop taking the survey or you can withdraw from the project altogether.

There will be no direct benefit to you for participating in this survey. The results of this project will provide a deeper understanding of memorable messages.

***Confidentiality and Privacy:***

I will not ask you for any personal information, such as your name or address. Please do not include any personal information in your survey responses. I will keep all study data secure in a password protected computer. Only my University of Hawai'i advisor and I will have access to the information. Other agencies that have legal permission have the right to review research records. The University of Hawai'i Human Studies Program has the right to review research records for this study.

***Compensation:***

You will receive a .50 Sona credits for your time and effort in participating in this research project.

***Future Research Studies:***

Identifiers will be removed from your identifiable private information and after removal of identifiers, the data may be used for future research studies or distributed to another investigator for future research studies and we will not seek further approval from you for these future studies.

**Questions:** If you have any questions about this study, please email me at [shimizuz@hawaii.edu](mailto:shimizuz@hawaii.edu)

You may also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Jessica Gasiorek, at [gasiorek@hawaii.edu](mailto:gasiorek@hawaii.edu)

You may contact the UH Human Studies Program at 808.956.5007 or [uhirb@hawaii.edu](mailto:uhirb@hawaii.edu) to discuss problems, concerns and questions, obtain information, or offer input with an informed individual who is unaffiliated with the specific research protocol. Please visit

<http://go.hawaii.edu/jRd> for more information on your rights as a research participant.

**To Access the Survey:** Please go to the following web page: (QUALTRICS LINK). You should find a link and instructions for completing the survey. Going to the first page of the survey implies your consent to participate in this study.

**Please print or save a copy of this page for your reference.**

**Mahalo!**

## Appendix B

### Memorable Message Questionnaire:

**Memorable messages** are verbal message which may be remembered for extremely long periods of time in which people perceive as a major influence on the course of their lives. In the space below, please provide an example of a memorable message you have received that has impacted your body image the most. An example of a memorable message is: *“My ex-boyfriend told me to ‘watch out’ I don’t want to end up like my friends who gained 50lb after they graduated from high school.”* Another example of a memorable message could be: *“Hearing the singer Lizzo say ‘I’m not ashamed of my body and neither should you’ made me realize my body should be something I’m proud of.”*

1. Who was the source of the message you provided?

- Familial relation (mother, brother, aunt, grandpa etc.)
- Friends or Peers
- Social Media Influencer
- Celebrity
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

2. On a scale of 1-7 how important is this person to you?

- |                                       |                                             |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> 1 Not Important | <input type="radio"/> 5                     |
| <input type="radio"/> 2               | <input type="radio"/> 6                     |
| <input type="radio"/> 3               | <input type="radio"/> 7 Extremely Important |
| <input type="radio"/> 4               |                                             |

3. How did you receive the message you provided?
- Face-to-face
  - Social media
  - Over the phone
  - Text messaging
  - Email
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
4. How often did you go back to the message on social media, after receiving it? *\*Only if participants answer 'social media' as their channel will they be asked this question\**
- Not at all
  - 1-5 times
  - 5-10 times
  - 10 or more times
5. On a scale from -7 to 7 how negative or positive do you feel this message was?
- |                                             |                                            |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> -7 Extremely Negative | <input type="radio"/> 1 Slightly Positive  |
| <input type="radio"/> -6                    | <input type="radio"/> 2                    |
| <input type="radio"/> -5                    | <input type="radio"/> 3                    |
| <input type="radio"/> -4 Negative           | <input type="radio"/> 4 Positive           |
| <input type="radio"/> -3                    | <input type="radio"/> 5                    |
| <input type="radio"/> -2                    | <input type="radio"/> 6                    |
| <input type="radio"/> -1 Slightly Negative  | <input type="radio"/> 7 Extremely positive |
| <input type="radio"/> 0 Neutral             |                                            |

## Appendix C

### Body Appreciation Scale (BAS)

**Instructions:** Below is a list of statements dealing with general ideas about how you appreciated your body after receiving the memorable message. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement.

1. After receiving the message, I respected my body more.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

2. After receiving the message, I felt better about my body.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

3. After receiving the message, I felt more satisfied with my body.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

4. After receiving the message, despite my body's flaws, I was more accepting of my body for what it is.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

5. After receiving the message, I was more inclined to feel that my body had at least some good qualities.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

6. After receiving the message, I took a more positive attitude toward my body.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

7. After receiving the message, I felt more attentive to my body's needs.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

8. After receiving the message, I felt that my self-worth was more independent of my body shape or weight.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

9. After receiving the message, I was more inclined to not focus my energy being concerned with my body shape or weight.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

10. After receiving the message, my feelings toward my body were more positive.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

11. After receiving the message, I engaged in more healthy behaviors to take care of my body.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

12. After receiving the message, I was more inclined to not allow unrealistic body images presented in the media to affect my attitudes toward my body.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

13. After receiving the message, despite my body's imperfections, I liked it more.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

## Appendix D

### Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RES)

**Instructions:** Below is a list of statements dealing with general feelings about self-esteem. When reading each question, please reflect to how you felt *right after* receiving the memorable message (this is **NOT** how you feel now). Indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement.

1. After receiving the message, I was more inclined to feel satisfied with myself.  
Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree
2. After receiving the message, I was more inclined to feel like I am no good at all.  
Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree
3. After receiving the message, I was more inclined to think that I have a number of good qualities.  
Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree
4. After receiving the message, I was more inclined to think I am able to do things as well as most other people.  
Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree
5. After receiving the message, I was more inclined to feel as if I do not have much to be proud of.  
Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree
6. After receiving the message, I was more inclined to feel useless at times.  
Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree
7. After receiving the message, I was more inclined to think that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.  
Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

8. After receiving the message, I was more inclined to wish I could have more respect for myself.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

9. After receiving the message, I was more inclined to feel that I am a failure.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

10. After receiving the message, I was more inclined to take a positive attitude toward myself.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

**Scoring:** Items 2, 5, 6, 8, 9 are reverse scored. Give “Strongly Disagree” 1 point, “Disagree” 2 points, “Neutral” 3 points, “Agree” 4 points, and “Strongly Agree” 5 points. Sum scores for all ten items. Keep scores on a continuous scale. Higher scores indicate higher self-esteem.



## Appendix E

### Demographic Information

**Directions:** For the following items, please select *all* responses that describe you or fill in the blank, as appropriate.

**Age:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Gender:**

- Male
- Female
- Outside the binary

**Ethnicity:** Check all that apply:

- Hispanic
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to respond

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