

Introduction

In Western society, people with high self-esteem (HSE) are viewed as more desirable than people with low self-esteem (LSE; Cameron et al., 2013).

People with LSE may conceal their self-esteem to avoid rejection and boost relational values with others.

- Yet individuals who hide important traits from others experience reduced well-being.

Research Goals

1. Do people with LSE conceal their self-esteem more than people with HSE?
2. Do people with LSE conceal their self-esteem because they expect rejection from others and expect to react negatively themselves?

Methods

Participants

233 participants living in North America

- Age: $M = 36.52$ years; 125 men, 107 women, and 1 person who did not identify

Procedure

Participants used the following scale for all measures:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Very Strongly Disagree		Moderately Disagree		Neutral		Moderately Agree		Very Strongly Agree

These measures included:

- **Self-esteem** (Rosenberg, 1965).
• E.g., "I take a positive attitude toward myself."
- **Self-esteem Concealment** (Cameron, 2016, unpublished).
• E.g., "I never share my opinions about myself."
- **Negative Reactions** (Cameron, 2016, unpublished).
• E.g. (Negative Reactions), "I would be distressed if my significant others knew my self-esteem."
- **Anticipated Rejection** (generated for this survey).
• E.g., "I think my significant others would be disappointed if they knew my true self-esteem."

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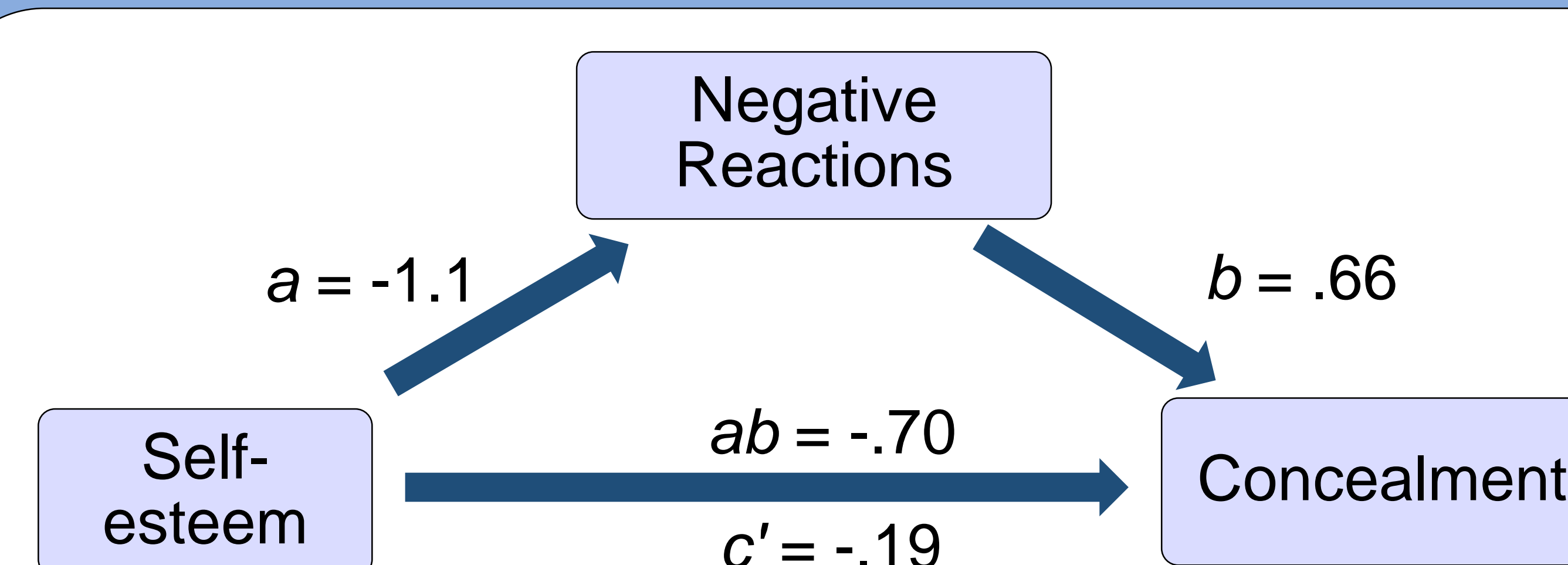
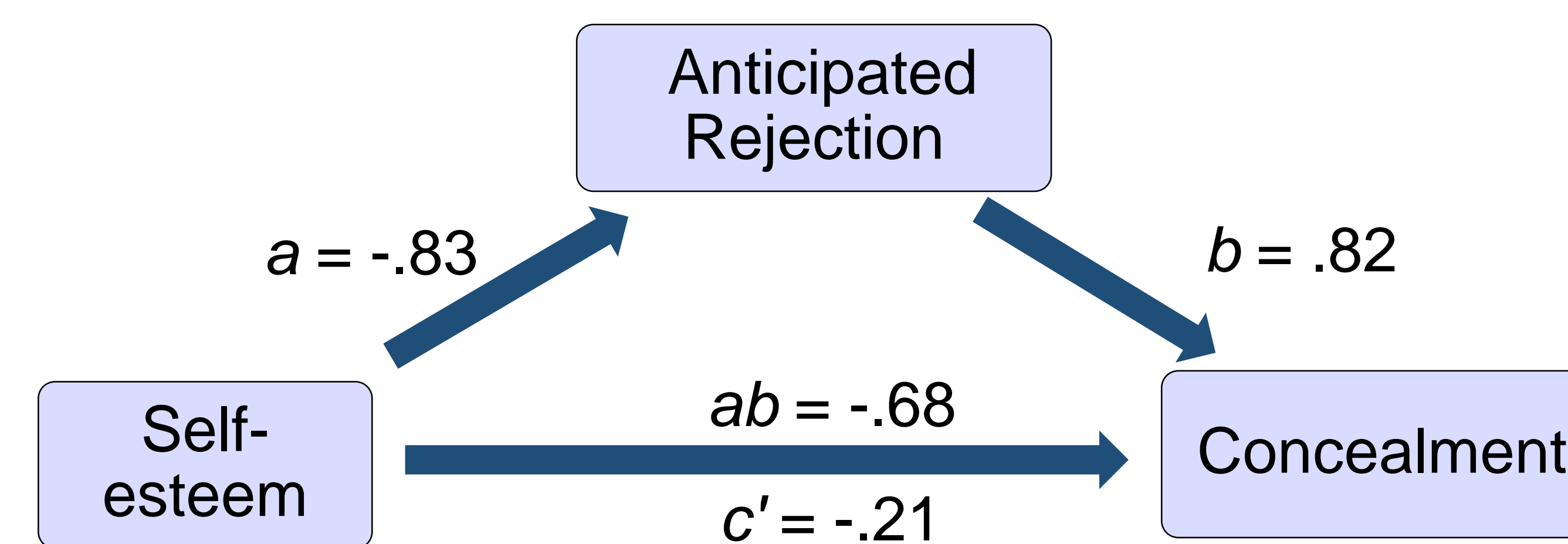
	Self-esteem	Concealment	Negative Reactions	Anticipated Rejection
Self-esteem	(.78)			
Concealment	-.60	(.93)		
Negative Reactions	-.67**	.79**	(.87)	
Anticipated Rejection	-.73**	.88**	.88**	(.66)

Note. Values in parentheses are internal consistency coefficients; Negative Reactions is a correlations between 2 scale items.

Results (Mediation)

Do people with LSE conceal their self-esteem because they expect rejection from others and expect to react negatively themselves?

- Yes, greater concealment is correlated with more negative reactions and anticipated rejection.



Mediator	Direct Effect				Indirect Effect		
	B	p	LL	UL	B	LL	UL
Anticipated Rejection	-.21	.030	-.40	-.02	-.68	-.88	-.50
Negative Reactions	-.19	.015	-.35	-.04	-.70	-.89	-.53

Note. LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit; 95% confidence intervals.

Results (Correlations)

Do people with LSE try to conceal their self-esteem more than those with HSE?

- Yes, LSE is correlated with greater concealment.

Do people with LSE expect more negative outcomes when their self-esteem is made apparent?

- Yes, LSE is correlated with greater negative reactions and anticipated rejection.

Summary

Although causation cannot be inferred from the present cross-sectional, correlational design, the results suggest:

- The lower a person's self-esteem, the more likely they are to conceal their self-esteem, anticipate rejection from others and expect negative emotional consequences upon the revelation of their self-esteem.
- People with lower self-esteem appear to conceal their self-esteem to avoid rejection and the negative feelings that come with revealing LSE to others.
- Thus, both anticipated rejection and negative reactions explain at least some of why lower self-esteem participants conceal their self-esteem.

Implications

- Western society's negative view of self-esteem may be driving self-esteem concealment.
- Those who conceal their self-esteem may experience reduced personal and relational well-being.

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