

**Body Image: the influence that the media has on self-objectification
across women of different ages.**

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence that the media has on self objectification across women of different ages. The issue of body dissatisfaction and the effects that the media has on this, is a growing concern among women today. There was a total of 202 participants who took part in this research; 153 younger women and 49 older women. This research used three questionnaires to gather the necessary information; The Revised Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (Quinn & Lewis, 2005), Self Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) and a Media Influence Scale. The analysis revealed that older women are more affected by body surveillance than younger women. Older women obtained higher mean scores for body surveillance, control levels, body shame and for self-esteem than younger women. The analysis also revealed that there was no significant relationship between body image and self-esteem. Finally the research revealed that contrary to what was predicted there was no significant correlation between body surveillance and media influence.

Introduction

Much research that has been carried out states that, women who have negative feelings about themselves and their body often suffer; not only their personal life but also in relation to their economic success (Wolf, 1991, as cited in McKinley and Hyde, 1996). McKinley and Hyde (1996) also state that much of the existing research states that women are more susceptible to suffer from negative body image and resulting effects than men. Therefore this is a very important and interesting aspect of research.

It is evident that over the last number of years our relationship with food and our body has worsened, and today, now presents an era in which obsessing over our bodies and our looks have become a daily activity. This is largely down to the media. In Western society the media is constantly bombarded with images of what they consider to be the perfect body type. These images generally reflect those of the thin idealised women (Cory & Burns, 2007). Hesse-Biber (1997) reports that the medias vision of beauty has transformed greatly throughout the decades. During the 1950's women were encouraged to be curvy with small waists, however, the ideal body image portrayed today is one of thinness (as cited in Robles, 2011). Many brands including; Abercrombie and Fitch and Victoria Secrets are known for promoting the image of thinness throughout their advertising. With so many different forms of media now available for example, magazines, film, television and websites such as Perez Hilton on the internet, the accessibility to these idealised images is also increasing. These sources of media continue to depict celebrities and the size zero "trend", which many believe to be an ideal that women should strive towards (Cory & Burns, 2007). Harper and Tiggermann (2008) state that on an analysis of women's magazine covers in America, 94% of them depicted an image of a thin idealised body. These images are not only difficult to attain but in many instances quite dangerous (Monro & Huon, 2005). Fredrickson and

Roberts (1997) report that this internalisation often results in many negative psychological effects including; depression, anxiety and ultimately eating disorders.

Due to this constant evaluation of the female body in our society it often leads to women feeling the need to keep constant surveillance on their own bodies. This often leads to self objectification. Self objectification refers to the feeling of women as been treated or viewed as a “body” instead of a being. This often leads to an increase in dissatisfaction with oneself and one’s body and can have many damaging effects such as a decrease in self-esteem, depression, anxiety and ultimately eating disorders (Cory & Burns, 2007; McKinley & Hyde, 1996; & Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) propose the idea of the objectification theory. They state that women often begin to internalise the views of society and observers. As a result, they begin to envision themselves as a sexual being who’s sexual functions are separate from their being. This perspective on self often results in many negative effects including; body monitoring, and an increase in shame and a decrease in self-esteem. Cory and Burns (2007) argue that the objectification theory is perhaps one of the most fundamental theoretical approaches that has emerged in understanding the causes of negative body image. Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) state that the body is often used as the dominant distinction between the sexes. However they go on to state that although the body is regularly studied in terms of its genetic and hormonal make-up, little attention is paid to the non-biological aspects. These non-biological aspects tend to focus on the socio-cultural influences, for example the media. Our bodies exist within these social and culture factors and therefore they aid in the construction of the body, and as a result the study of these influences is important. McKinley and Hyde (1996) continue to argue that this theory is significant as it explores the female body in relation to these outside pressures and examines the impact that sexual objectification can have on a women.

There are many examples of how dangerous this desire to have the “perfect” body and self objectification can be; Mary-Kate Olsen, an American actress, checked into rehab just before her eighteenth birthday and was treated for anorexia. Mary-Kate is hardly recognisable from her identical twin sister Ashley, yet when compared to her sister in an interview she responded with “*Are you kidding me? I look in the mirror and I’m like why do you look pretty and I look ugly?*” (Johnston, 2007). It is clear to see that Mary-Kate was suffering with very low self esteem and body related issues at this time. Although, McKinley and Hyde (1996) argue that it is important to note that not all women suffer or experience sexual objectification in the same way. However with the increasing amount of idealised body images portrayed in the media daily, it is nearly impossible to escape this aspect of the Western culture today.

Literature Review

Objectification Theory

Many feminist theorists have reported that often the female body becomes somewhat of an object that is examined and evaluated or something that exists “*to be looked at*” (Spitzack, 1990, as cited in McKinley & Hyde, pg 182). Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) agree with this theory. They state that sexual objectification occurs when a women’s body or sexual functions are separated from her being and instead looked upon as instruments or that the body exists for the pleasure of others. Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) report that as a result of this objectification, many women often begin to view themselves in a similar manner. They begin to become outside observers of their own body and begin self objectification. Gordon (2008) claims that women begin to believe that their body belongs less to themselves and that it is public domain and open for evaluation and criticism. Cory and Burns (2007) further extend this belief. They state that women begin to divert their attention inwards and monitor their own body as a reaction or anticipation of other peoples judgements. Crawford et al. (2009) hold a similar view. They state that as a consequence of living in an objectified society women learn to objectify themselves. They internalise society’s feminine ideal of thinness and youthfulness and begin to measure their worth against this ideal. Although they state that older women typically engage in less self-objectification than younger women. However Webster and Tiggemann (2003) report that while much of the previous research focuses on a limited number of women in college there is an increasing amount of evidence that older women are also suffering with body shame and the desire to be thinner. Thus the feeling of body shame remains stable across the lifespan. Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) argue that women begin to view themselves as they think other people view them. In order to ‘fit in’ they attempt to comply with the cultural images of the idealised vision of beauty. They begin to internalize what society deems an

appropriate look. Women begin to feel that these views are in fact coming from within themselves and not external pressures such as the media. Mitchell and Mazzeo (2009) further comment on this issue. They state that sexual objectification promotes the process of internalisation and encourages women to view their own bodies as objects for society and only valuable for the use of others. They believe that looking like the images in the media will provide more positive judgments. They start to view themselves as objects. This constant self surveillance and objectification produces many negative effects in women. An increase in body dissatisfaction emerges from the thinking that the thin idealised image in the media is something that needs to be strived towards (Morrison, Kalin & Morrison, 2004. as cited in Cory & Burns, 2007).

Media Influences

Harris (1994) and Levine and Smolak (1998) define the mass media as modes of communication that produce messages which are designed to reach a very large number of individuals with the goal of maximizing a profit (as cited in Thompson & Heinberg, 1999). Due to the mass media's vast extension throughout society, Willinge, Touyz & Charles (2006), argue that it is probably the single most powerful and influential transmitter of the idealised body image for females. In the past images of beauty and femininity were largely portrayed through the use of art, music and literature. However the media and its influence have drastically changed and evolved since then, and it is today's print and electronic media that have come under much criticism for their depiction of the idealised body image (Thompson & Heinberg, 1999). Johnson, Tobin and Steinberg (1989) state that the thin ideal body image which is portrayed in the media is typically 15% below the average weight of a woman (as cited in Hawkins, Richards, MacGranley & Stein, 2004). While Wiseman, Gray, Mosimann and Ahrens (1992) state that while the average American woman is in fact getting

heavier, the media images of women are indeed getting thinner (as cited in Cory & Burns, 2007). Thompson and Heinberg (1999) continue to add to this argument. They state that only 10% of women portrayed on television are overweight. This is not a true depiction of our society today. Willinge et al (2006) states that 75% of people interviewed believed that the media promotes thinness as an ideal to strive towards for women. Hawkins et al (2004) agree with these statements and argue that while the media image of women becomes thinner it is making the ideal body even more difficult to attain and is creating added pressure on women. Gordon (2008) continues to note the media offer little diversity in the portrayal of women. In a report carried out by Dove skin care about 'real' women's attitude towards the images shown in the media, 75% of women stated that they would like to see more diversity of women in the media. This included women of different shape, size and age (Etkoff, Orbach, Scott & D'Agostino, 2004). In more recent years the size zero trend has been emphasised and encouraged in many parts of Western society. Willinge et al. (2006) states that females are encouraged to strive towards this image, although this ideal is ultimately extreme and dangerous and unattainable for most. Berel and Irving (1998) stated in a report that female college students reported that the media applied the most pressure on the idea of thinness than any other source (as cited in Robles, 2011). While Bedford and Johnson (2006) state that younger women are often more sensitive to the multidimensional nature of the media and thus this often results in decreased levels of control levels.

McKinley and Hyde (1996) report that the media depict men and women in different forms which may add to the sexual objectification as discussed previously. Throughout the media images that represent men generally concentrate on their face and head, while images representing women tend to focus on their body. McKinley and Hyde (1996) argue that this is visible throughout all visual forms of media, in particular music videos, advertisement and women's magazines. This emphasis on the thin idealised body image often increases the

feeling of sexual objectification. They claim that continued exposure to these images results in many women feeling the need to change their appearance in an attempt to ‘fit in’.

Bessenoff (2006) claims that continual exposure to these images of the thin idealised body in the media can have many negative effects on women including; a decrease in self-esteem, depression and eating disorders. While McKinley and Hyde (1996) comment that one of the worst effects that repeated exposure to the media can have on women is that of self objectification, that is that women begin to treat themselves as a body that is there for evaluation. McKinley and Hyde (1996) agree with the conclusion from Bessenoff (2006) and continue to state that this in turn leads to a decrease in self-esteem and depression and worst case- eating disorders.

Body Dissatisfaction

Morrison et al. (2004) define body image as a multidimensional concept, it relates to how individuals “*think, feel, and behave with regard to their own physical attributes*” (p.571). Monteath and McCabe (2004) state that body image includes both a perceptual and an attitudinal section. They argue that there are two main types of body dissatisfaction. A disturbance in the perceptual section often creates a situation when a person holds a distorted view of their body shape and size. While a disturbance in the attitudinal section effects a person’s happiness with their appearance of their body or their frustration with its functions. While Bessenoff (2006) defines body dissatisfaction as the negative evaluation of one’s body and the tendency to compare one’s body to other people or images.

Willinge et al. (2006) states that the idea of body dissatisfaction is becoming more of a societal norm. They estimate that two thirds of young women are faced with issues of body dissatisfaction and negative body image. Bedford and Johnson (2006) state that women of all

ages suffer with body shame and negative feelings in relation to their body which results in body dissatisfaction. Cory and Burns (2007) comment that body dissatisfaction in women often arises from images continuously displayed in the media. As previously discussed women begin to internalise these views and begin to view their own body as a thing rather than a being which it turn leads to an increase in body dissatisfaction. Therefore, women become socialised into this view and find it difficult to distance themselves from it. Willinge et al. (2006) states in their report, that when asked to guess other women's sizes body dissatisfied females judged celebrities to be thinner than they actually were and they also judged the ideal size for a general women to be thinner then the already thin female celebrities. This shows an unrealistic attitude and disturbance in judging appropriate sizes for females with body dissatisfaction.

Hawkins et al. (2004), Bessenoff (2006) and Willinge et al. (2006) state that there is a direct correlation between women who have been exposed to media images of the idealised body and body dissatisfaction. They believe that body dissatisfaction can have many lasting and damaging effects on women and that these problems in society are more prominent today than ever before. However Willinge et al. (2006) also states that there is a suggestion that it is body dissatisfied females own perception towards these media images, and not the exposure itself that delivers this negative outcome. However Bessenoff (2006) argues that the media must accept some responsibility for the increase in negative body images due to their continuous portrayal of the thin idealised body image.

Eating Disorders

McKinley and Hyde (1996) state that eating disorders are one of the worst effects that today's society of sexual objectification has created. Robles (2011) defines anorexia nervosa

as a self-imposed starvation. The suffer becomes obsessed with the concept of becoming thin and losing weight. While he states that bulimia nervosa is characterised by a series of sessions of binge eating which is usually followed by a drastic method such as vomiting or the use of diuretics to get rid of the food. Cory and Burns (2007) state that anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa are biopsychology disorders. These diseases result in the suffer developing a distorted view of both their self image and self perception. While Robles (2011) continues this view and reports the eating disorders produce very serious both emotional and physical problems including; extreme emotions and attitudes towards food, and if left untreated or undiagnosed can result in death. De la Rie, Norordenbos and van Furth (2005) supports this point and declare that such eating disorders directly affect the suffers quality of life in many different ways (as cited in Mitchell & Mazzeo, 2009).

Garfinkel and Garner (1992) state that women account for almost 90% of suffer in eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia and are, therefore, more likely to suffer than men (as cited in Mitchell & Mazzeo, 2009). Cory and Burn (2007) claim that these illness typically begin during early adolescences and early adulthood, as this is a period in a women's life when she is most susceptible to the pressures from the media and other forces to be thin. Cory and Burns (2007) report that many women fail to meet this desired image and as a result develop such eating disorders. Noll and Fredrickson (1998), comment that many women view diets as a means to achieve this idealistic body image, however often these diets go too far and become dangerous resulting in the onset of eating disorders (as cited in Cory & Burn, 2007). Robles (2011) backs this statement and reports that women often respond to the pressures from society to be thin through diets and exercise. McKinley and Hyde (1996) further develop this view. They report that there is so much pressure about beauty and thinness placed on women today. Women have so much to worry about however, have little control of many aspects in relation to their desired beauty. This feeling of no control often

results in such drastic measures such as the development of eating disorders. *“Eating disorders become prevalent as women struggle to break their ties with food and tie their self-esteem with a dress size”* (Robles, 2011 pp.66). Robles (2011) also stated in his research among female college students, that 12% admitted to have been treated for an eating disorder, while 25.3% answered that they regularly engage in binge eating. Robles agrees that these are high statistics and notes the picture of the ‘perfect’ body that is widely depicted in today’s media compels women to conform to this image at all costs.

However, though much research backs the claim that sexual objectification leads to self objectification and often results in many negative results as previously discussed including eating disorders, not all research agrees. For example, Mulholland and Mintz (2001) state that eating disorders are generally a greater issue among European American women, and that African American women are less likely to suffer such effects. Therefore, they state that this theory may not be valid among certain groups of women and for that reason, cannot be generalised (as cited in Mitchell & Mazzeo, 2009).

Negative Effects

McKinley and Hyde (1996) report that we now live in a society that the objectification of women has become embedded in the societal norm and so there is always potential that women will also begin to adopt this reasoning and feel pressure regarding their physical appearance. McKinley and Hyde (1996) comment that this pressure in society often encourages women to change their physical appearance . They state that these actions often create heightened self consciousness and as a result a decrease in self-esteem. Darwin (1872, 1965) claims that this decrease in self-esteem often promotes other negative feelings including; depression and anxiety. Women begin to evaluate themselves based on what they

believe others are thinking and begin to think that they are not good enough (as cited in McKinley & Hyde, 1996). McKinley and Hyde (1996) state that women often become unsure of how they are perceived by others, which can lead to increasing feelings of anxiety or shame. Robles (2011) reports that numerous studies suggest that low self-esteem is often a driving force towards eating disorders. While Ghaderi (2001) backs this statement and reports that a major decrease in self-esteem is a significant risk factor in the development in anorexia or bulimia (as cited in Robles, 2011).

McKinley and Hyde (1996) argue that the media play a huge role of negative feelings experienced by women. Many of the images displayed depicted thin models in fashion that many women cannot fit into. For example, certain hemlines or necklines require particular body shapes that are unachievable for most. Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) state that many women begin to feel emotions such as shame towards themselves because they are unable to look like these models. While Bartky (1988) comments that the measure of shame that a woman feels towards herself and her appearance can be directly correlated to the extent in which she has internalised the media's vision of beauty (as cited in Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Cory and Burn (2007) further add to this view and report that many studies have found that there is often a major difference between a woman's actual size and her desired body size. This failure to meet society's perception of normal often leads to shame and a decrease in self-esteem.

Beauty and Success

McKinley and Hyde (1996) claims that a large amount of research states that how a woman's body appears to others can directly influence or determine her life experiences. They continue to argue that attractiveness and beauty are often vital not only for women in

their personal life but also in relation to their economic status. Therefore, this creates more pressure for women to strive towards the perfect body as they feel that it will help to bring them success. In the report carried out by Etcoff et al. (2004) 45% of women surveyed agreed that women who are beautiful have a more opportunities and a greater chance of success. Gordon (2008) suggests that the overall global message for women is one of beauty and thinness. Women need to strive towards this in order to attain their goals. Robles (2011) reports that female adolescents are mostly influenced by this idea of thinness and often “*use their mirror as an indispensable measure of their worth as a human being*” (pp.66). Thomsen, Weber and Brown (2002) claim that much of the previous research suggests that most magazines directed towards the female market encourage the idea that happiness and success is directly related to beauty and thinness (as cited in Cory and Burns, 2007). Hesse-Biber (1997) agrees with this and comments that many young women are strongly influenced by this message that only the beautiful and thin obtain love and success in life. And as a result of this view young women become preoccupied and obsessed with their weight and body (cited in Robles, 2011). Ward (1995) claims that after an analysis of the most popular prime time television shows, an overriding trend was discovered. He states that much of the female characters depicted the importance of physical beauty as key for attracting partners and overall success throughout life (as cited in Robles, 2011). However, Crokers (2002) state that this evaluation of self-worth can be dangerous to many women. He reported that women who tend to measure their self-worth and evaluate themselves in regards to thinness, were more likely to suffer with issues including; stress, anger, decrease in academic grades and often eating disorders (as cited in Robles, 2011).

Conclusion of Literature Reviewed

In 1913, Webster's dictionary defined beauty as "*properties pleasing the eye, the ear, the intellect, the aesthetic faculty or the moral sense*" (as cited in Etkoff et al. 2004 pp. 4). However, it is clear from the literature reviewed that the concept of beauty has changed drastically over time. Gordon (2008) reports that the media are criticised with promoting sexual objectification through presenting the image of thinness with regards to women, and also with promoting that women's main purpose is to be beautiful, with a disregard to intelligence. He continues to argue that, this idea that conforming to this idealised image will bring success in both personal and economic status throughout one's life is causing an increase in body dissatisfaction and self objectification in many women. While Harper and Tiggemann (2008) claim that there is undoubtedly added pressure on women to conform to the media and societies idea of beauty. These images of thinness often promote body dissatisfaction and other negative effects in women as discussed throughout. However, Etkoff (2004) states that the portrayal of beauty and thinness in the media is not a true depiction of women in today's society, and is placing increasing pressure on women to try to conform to this.

It is evident through the study of previous literature that the media plays a significant role in sexual objectification of women which leads to many negative effects including; self objectification, a decrease in self-esteem and sometimes eating disorders. This thesis sets out to explore the concept of sexual objectification in women and why it is a growing concern with regards to the media. Also it aims to explore the negative effects it causes including a decrease in self-esteem and investigate if the same is true for women of all ages.

Aim

This research project set out to investigate the influence that the media has on self objectification across women of different ages. It will also explore the effects that this self objectification can have on these women's self-esteem. This study will explore why the issue of self objectification is a growing concern among the female population and investigate whether the medias influence decreases as women age.

Hypothesis

- 1.** Younger women will have higher body surveillance than older women.

- 2.** Younger women will have higher body shame than older women.

- 3.** Younger women will have lower control levels than older women.

- 4.** There will be a significant negative correlation between body image and self-esteem.

- 5.** There will be a significant positive correlation between body surveillance and media influence.

Methodology

Materials

All participants completed a short booklet of questionnaires containing; The Revised Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (Quinn & Lewis, 2005), Self Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) and a Media Influence Scale. Participants also answered demographic questions on age. In addition to the questionnaire booklet that was prepared, these three questionnaires were also inputted to google docs. This was then uploaded onto Facebook and women were then asked to fill this out.

1. The Revised Objectified Body Consciousness Scale

The Revised Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (Quinn & Lewis, 2005) was developed and validated to measure objectified body consciousness in young people. It contains 3 subscales, (a) surveillance (viewing the body as an outside observer), (b) body shame (feeling shame when the body does not conform), and (c) appearance control beliefs (Quinn & Lewis, 2005).

(a) *Surveillance*. The surveillance subscale measures how frequently individuals would monitor their body and how often they would think of their body in terms of how it looks, rather than how it feels. This subscale consists of 8 items (e.g. 'I often worry about whether the clothes I am wearing make me look good'). Responses are scored on a 5-point scale ranging from (1) 'strongly disagree', (2) 'disagree', (3) 'not sure', (4) 'agree', and (5) 'strongly agree'. Scores can range between 8 and 40 with higher scores indicating a higher level of body surveillance.

(b) *Body shame*. The body shame subscale assesses the extent to which a respondent feels shame if they do not fulfil cultural expectations for their body. This subscale consists of 8 items (e.g. 'I feel like I must be a bad person when I don't look as good as I could'). Responses are scored on a 5-point scale ranging from (1) 'strongly disagree', (2) 'disagree', (3) 'not sure', (4) 'agree', and (5) 'strongly agree'. Scores can range between 8 and 40 with higher scores indicating a higher level of body shame.

(c) *Control*. The control subscale measures an individual's sense of control that they have over their weight and appearance. A high scorer would believe that they could control their weight and appearance if they work hard enough, whereas a low scorer would believe that weight and appearance is controlled by factors such as genes or heredity. This subscale consists of 8 items (e.g. 'I can weigh what I'm supposed to when I try hard enough'). Responses are scored on a 5-point scale ranging from (1) 'strongly disagree', (2) 'disagree', (3) 'not sure', (4) 'agree', and (5) 'strongly agree'. Scores can range between 8 and 40 with higher scores indicating a higher sense of control over weight and appearance.

2. The Self-Esteem Scale

Self-esteem was assessed by 'The Self-Esteem Scale' (Rosenberg, 1965), which measures global feelings of self-worth or self-acceptance. This 10-item scale is scored using a 4-point response format (1= strongly agree; 4 = strongly disagree) to statements such as "I feel that I have a number of good qualities". Scores range from 10-40, with higher scores indicating higher self-esteem.

3. The Media Influence Scale

The Media Influence Scale (Stice et al, 1996) was adapted from the Perceived Sociocultural Pressure Scale. It contains 10 items which measure an individual's level of interest in magazines, T.V. shows and other mass media that promote a thin ideal body. An example of questions include: 'I like to read fashion magazines that contain thin celebrities' and 'I like to watch entertainment shows featuring thin celebrities. This scale is scored on a 5-point scale, (1= strongly agree; 5= strongly disagree). Each item is rated from 1 to 5, of these items, 10 scores need to be reversed from 5 to 1. Scores range from 10-50 for Media Influence. Low scores indicating more influence, and higher scores indicating less influence.

Participants

In this study a total number of 202 women were used, all of whom were over the legal age of 18. Participants were selected through snowball sampling. It was a non-experimental correlation study. The access to these women was gained through 15 women who each took 10 questionnaire booklets and passed them out. In addition to the questionnaire booklet that was prepared, these three questionnaires were also inputted to google docs. This was then uploaded onto Facebook and women were then asked to fill this out. The age range varied as the research was interested in comparing the effects of the media on self objectification in women of different ages. Participants age ranged from 18- 65 , with the average age being 27.

Design

The present research study used a non-experimental correlation design. The criterion variables (CV) within this research were self objectification and self-esteem, and the predictor variables (PV) include age and media exposure.

Data Collection

Data was collected by handing out ten questionnaires to fifteen women who were asked to complete one and pass the other nine out. In addition to the questionnaire booklet that was prepared, these three questionnaires were also inputted to google docs. This was then uploaded onto Facebook and women were then asked to fill this out. A total number of 202 questionnaires were collected. The research gave a brief outline as to the nature of the study and also outlined the major ethical considerations such as confidentiality and the right to withdraw at any time. The research stressed the importance of honesty and full completion of each section whilst filling out the questionnaires. Also, each questionnaire had a page which featured telephone numbers and email addresses of relevant help lines that participants may have found useful. After the questionnaires were answered they were either placed in a sealed envelope, or onto a usb key and were kept safe until the researcher was ready to begin the analysis. When all the data was collected, all negative answers were recoded and total scores were computed. The data was analysed by SPSS 18.

Ethical Considerations

As a researcher, understanding the importance of ethical considerations and enforcing them throughout the research is very important. Therefore, ethical considerations were taken seriously and effectively throughout the research. There were a number of ethical issues that had to be taken into account throughout this research. The age of participants was one of the main ethical issues. The researcher had to ensure that all participants were above the legal age of 18; as if participants are below 18 consent must be sought from a legal guardian. Confidentiality was another important ethical concern. To maintain anonymity participants were asked not to put their name on any of the questionnaires. All paper work, transcripts and data were held in a secure place until needed; therefore holding the issue of confidentiality in high esteem. Before commencing the questionnaires consent was sought from all participants and they were briefed on the topic of the research. Participants were also informed that their participation was optional and they had the right to withdraw at any time and their answers would not be used in the analysis.

Results

Descriptive statistics for body surveillance, body shame, body control, self-esteem and media influence are represented in the table below.

Descriptive statistics

Table one: Means and standard deviations for all the variables used in the analyses for older and younger women

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Younger Women					
Surveillance	153	9.00	37.00	19.97	5.52
Body Shame	153	8.00	39.00	26.51	5.91
Control	153	8.00	34.00	19.62	4.13
Self-esteem	153	12.00	40.00	29.95	5.51
Media	153	11.00	50.00	34.87	7.73
	153				
Older Women					
Surveillance	49	11.00	34.00	24.14	5.05
Body Shame	49	8.00	37.00	28.31	5.82
Control	49	10.00	37.00	20.41	4.75
Self-esteem	49	24.00	40.00	34.53	4.08
Media	49	13.00	50.00	27.63	7.90
	49				

As can be seen from table one above, the mean score on the surveillance subscale was higher for older women (mean = 24.14, SD = 5.05) than for younger women (mean = 19.97, SD = 5.52). The mean score on body shame subscale was also higher for older women (mean = 28.31, SD = 5.82), than younger women (mean = 26.51, SD = 5.91). The mean score on the control subscale was also higher for older women (mean = 20.41, SD = 4.75), than younger women (mean = 19.62, SD = 4.13). Additionally, the mean score on the self-esteem subscale was also higher for older women (mean = 34.53, SD = 4.08), than for younger women (mean

= 29.95, SD = 5.51). However, the mean score for media influence was higher for younger women (mean = 34.87, SD = 7.73), than older women (mean = 27.63, SD = 7.90).

Inferential statistics

T-tests

Hypothesis 1: Hypothesis one predicted that younger women would have higher body surveillance than older women. An independent t-test was conducted to compare age difference in surveillance, this showed that there was a highly significant difference $t(200) = -4.699$, $p < .01$. However, as the mean scores for body surveillance was higher for older women (mean = 24.14, SD = 5.05) than for younger women (mean = 19.97, SD = 5.52), and the difference was significant, this indicated that older women were more concerned about body image. Therefore the hypothesis was not supported.

Hypothesis 2: Hypothesis two proposed that younger women would have higher body shame than older women. The mean scores were higher for older women (mean = 28.31, SD = 5.82), than younger women (mean = 26.51, SD = 5.91). An independent t-test was carried out and indicated that although it was not a significant difference of body shame between younger women and older women $t(200) = -1.858$, $p > .065$, it was approaching significance. Therefore the hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis 3: Hypothesis three stated that younger women would have lower control levels than older women. The mean score on the control subscale was higher for older women (mean = 20.41, SD = 4.75), than younger women (mean = 19.62, SD = 4.13). However, an independent t-test carried out revealed that there was no significant difference of control between younger women and older women $t(200) = -1.118, p > .265$. Therefore the hypothesis was partially accepted.

Correlations

Hypothesis 4: Hypothesis four proposed that there would be a significant negative correlation between body surveillance and self-esteem. However, Pearson R correlation analysis indicated that there was no significant negative correlation between body surveillance and self-esteem for younger women in the present study ($r = .350, N = 153, p < .05$) or for older women ($r = .028, N = 49, p < .851$). Therefore the hypothesis was not supported.

Hypothesis 5: Hypothesis five predicted that there would be a significant positive correlation between body surveillance and media influence. However, contrary to the proposed hypothesis Pearson R correlation analysis indicated that there was a moderate negative significant correlation. For younger women the correlation indicated ($r = -.389, N = 153, p < .05$) and for older women ($r = -.326, N = 49, p < .022$). Therefore the hypothesis was rejected.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to examine the influence that the media has on self-objectification across women of different ages. The present study aimed to investigate the difference in these effects between younger women and older women. This study focused on the pressure that the media places on women to attain the unrealistic size zero, which is commonly portrayed to be the ideal shape and size that women should strive towards. The study aimed to extend previous research by examining the extent that media exposure impacted on women and how they feel and think about themselves and their body.

The first hypothesis predicted that younger women would have higher body surveillance than older women. Therefore indicating that younger women would be more concerned with body image than older women. However, contrary to the predicted hypothesis older women had a higher means score for body surveillance than younger women. An independent t-test was conducted to compare age difference in surveillance; this showed that there was a highly significant difference. Thus indicating that on average older women were more concerned with body image. Therefore this hypothesis was not supported. This result is very interesting as it is contrary to previous research findings. Crawford et al. (2009) report that older women often engage in less self-surveillance than younger women. Older women often have different life-task perspectives than younger women including work or family, while many younger women are fixated on developing relationships or friendships with peers. Thus, much research states that younger women are more likely to focus on their body and have higher self-surveillance (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; McKinley & Hyde,

1996; Crawford et al. 2009). Fredrickson & Roberts (1997) and McKinley & Hyde (1996) agree that women are often viewed as 'bodies' who exist solely for the pleasure of others; they are looked upon as mere instruments. As a result of this women often begin to view themselves in a similar manner. They begin to internalize what society deems acceptable. They begin to believe that these unrealistic goals in relation to beauty are attainable thus increasing their sense of self objectification. Cory & Burns (2007) state that self objectification often has destructive consequences such as an increase in shame and anxiety. The objectified body consciousness and thus an increase in self-surveillance has been commonly associated with younger females within our society, however contrary to this assumption; this study found that older women are more concerned with their body and therefore scored higher in self-surveillance. It may be said that much of the previous research focused primarily on younger women's self-surveillance and body dissatisfaction. However, the result in the present study supports the findings of Etcoff et al. (2004) who report that body dissatisfaction and the resulting self-surveillance concerns women of all ages. Etcoff et al. (2004) state that almost half of women over the age of 30 do not feel comfortable describing their body as beautiful. This result is also mirrored in who report that body dissatisfaction and self-objectification is becoming an increasingly common trend in older women. Due to the increased pressure and exposure of the idealised female body in the media older women now have a heightened sense of self-evaluation and self-objectification. And now feel more pressure to conform to the societal norm than before.

The second hypothesis hypothesised that younger women would have higher body shame than older women. However, in contrast to this prediction, older women attained a higher means score for body shame than younger women. This result goes against much of the previous results reported. Crawford et al. (2009) report that due to an increase in societal

pressure on women, many begin to internalise these feelings of thinness and attractiveness and adopts the belief that appearance is an extremely important measure in which to judge a woman. McKinley and Hyde (1996) state that society today is largely based around the idea that women should be thin and beautiful in order to achieve their goals. This belief has become embedded in society which adds pressure on women to achieve this often unachievable goal.

As a result of this internalisation of negative opinions women, in particular younger women often begin to suffer an increase in body shame. Robles (2011) state that female adolescents are particularly manipulated by this idea of thinness is perfection as they see it as a means of measuring their own self worth. Therefore, they learn to internalise on objectifying observers' perspective of their body which leads to an increase in body shame. However, the results of the present study are similar to them of Bedford and Johnson (2006). They reported that there was no significant difference between younger women and older women in relation to body dissatisfaction and further negative effects such as body shame. Bedford and Johnson (2006) state that women of all ages suffer with body shame and negative feelings in relation to their body. The findings of the present study show that older women scored on average higher, than younger women on body shame. Thus older women suffer with higher body shame. Webster and Tiggemann (2003) report that while much of the previous research focuses on a limited number of women in college there is an increasing amount of evidence that older women are also suffering with body shame and the desire to be thinner. Thus the feeling of body shame remains stable across the lifespan.

The third hypothesis states that younger women would have lower control levels than older women. The mean scores for control levels were higher for older women than younger

women. Although there was not a statistically significant difference in mean control scores, older women did score slightly higher in the mean control measure than younger women. Therefore the hypothesis was partially supported. Bedford and Johnson (2006) state that younger women are often more sensitive to the multidimensional nature of the media and thus this often results in decreased levels of control levels. Research carried out by Mitchell and Mazzeo (2009) mirrors these views as it states that an increase in body dissatisfaction often results in decreased levels of control and often encourages women, particularly younger women to diet in the hope of manipulating their size and shape. McKinley and Hyde (1996) state that often women attempt to change their appearance to conform to societal norms through unhealthy and often dangerous means such as diets, over exercise and sometimes even surgery. This decrease level in control level and the feeling of obligation to look a particular way often leads to eating disorders. Fredrickson and Roberts (1996) report that the idealised body image which is portrayed in the media has dropped dramatically in size over time. The 'perfect body' which is now portrayed in the media has become almost impossible to attain and is often quite dangerous to do so. Cory and Burns (2007) indicate that women often view diets as way to reach this image which often places them at risk of eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa. Cory and Burns (2007) state that the onset for these diseases typically occurs between early adolescence and early adulthood. As it is typically young women who feel the most pressure from the media and others to conform to the idea of thinness. However, the result in the present study indicate that older women are increasingly feeling pressure to conform to the medias image of the 'perfect body' and therefore also have a heightened increase in control levels.

The fourth hypothesis predicted that there would be a significant negative correlation between body image and self-esteem. Pearson R correlation analysis indicated that there was

no significant negative correlation between body surveillance and self-esteem in the present study. Therefore, this hypothesis was rejected. This result is surprising as it goes against much of the previous research which indicates that women typically suffer with low self-esteem (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997 & McKinley & Hyde, 1996). McKinley and Hyde (1996) state that society today is largely based on the objectification of women. They state that often no matter what women do they are still largely categorised on how they physically appear. This often results in a heightened sense of self-consciousness and a decrease in self-esteem. Frederickson and Roberts (1997) agree with this and report that this decrease in self-esteem and negative feeling of shame often occurs when women begin to evaluate themselves based on what they believe other people view them as. These feelings become internalised and as a result women suffer a decrease in self-esteem. McKinley and Hyde (1996) state that the image which is continually shown in the media portrays one of youthfulness and thinness. Therefore, this may place added pressure on older women to attain this image. However, Wolf (1991) comments that only 1 in 40,000 women actually meet this media vision of beauty (as cited in McKinley & Hyde, 1996). However, the exposure to these images prompt women to attempt to look like this which often leads to a decrease in self-esteem (Fredrickson & Roberts 1997). Bessenoff (2006), reports that women who suffer body dissatisfaction often associate their failure to reach their ideal body with their self-concept and as a result of this often suffer with a decrease in self-esteem. However, the present study found that there was no significant correlation between body image and self-esteem. Therefore the majority of participants were not suffering with low self-esteem. The mean age of the women was 27 which is moderately young. This may suggest that these women are confident and content in themselves and their bodies and therefore have relatively high self-esteem.

The fifth hypothesis hypothesised that there would be a significant positive correlation between body surveillance and media influence. However, contrary to the proposed hypothesis Pearson R correlation analysis indicated that there was a moderate negative significant correlation. Hence, this means that women were less likely to focus on body surveillance when exposed to images in the media. Therefore, hypothesis five was not supported. This result is very surprising as much of the previous research conducted in relation to media influence and body image have proposed and found that there is a relationship between body surveillance and media in women. Willinge et al. (2006) and Thompson and Heinberg (1999) state that the media, due to its extensive reach is the single most powerful source of the idealised body image for women. Thus as a result they comment that it is also a leading cause of body dissatisfaction and resulting negative effects such as eating disorder. McKinley and Hyde (1996) report that repeated exposure to images in the media of the idealised body places increased pressure on women to look a particular way. They state that women are highly influenced by what they see in the media, which consequently leads to negative effects such as body surveillance. Willing et al. (2006) agree with this statement. They conclude that exposure to the idealised body image in the media results in body dissatisfaction and an increase in self-surveillance. Cory and Burns (2007) report that over the last number of years; while the average women has been getting bigger, the images of women in the media has in fact been getting smaller. Therefore this is not a true depiction of the female body. This as a results places increased pressure on women to attain this look. Often females begin to engage in unhealthy eating habits to attain these unrealistic bodies that are daily seen throughout the media. Robles (2011) agrees with this statement and states that is difficult to escape these images in the media as they are so widely available on TV, magazines, billboards etc. Often these images portray bodies that are unattainable for many women and in fact develop unrealistic standards and visions of beauty.

Cory and Burns (2007) report that women who are exposed to these images were more likely to report an increase in body dissatisfaction and self-surveillance than those who were not. However, the present study found that there was a significant moderate negative correlation between the two variables. The researcher can only speculate why the females in this particular study are less concerned with their image when exposed to images in the media. The majority of participants in the present study were women aged 18-30. This may suggest that women are more confident and happy within themselves and their appearance, despite external influence from the media.

Limitations

There were a number of limitations that may have affected this study. The main limitation was the size of the participating population. The present study included 202 women; 153 women aged between 18-30 and only 49 women aged between 31-65. The sample size of the older women was quite small. Sample size is important when carrying out certain statistical analyses such as t-tests and correlations (Cohen, 1992). Also the mean age of them women has 27, which is relatively young. Therefore the distribution of ages was not even which may have effected the results. The sample size used in the present study is very small in comparison to the general population of Ireland and therefore the results are difficult to generalise (Cohen, 1992). If the sample size was larger, results may be different and also may be more representative of the general Irish population. In addition, participants used were all females based in South Dublin. Therefore only offering a narrow view of society. This may have affected the answers giving due to the environment that they are living and socialising in.

Another limitation that may have affected the present study is the method which was chosen to collect and analysis the data. For the present study a quantitative approach was selected. This may be seen as a limitation however, as participants were limited to their choice of answers. If qualitative analysis was chosen it may have offered a more in depth analysis of the women thus the results may have been different. However, due to time considerations quantitative analysis was chosen as the most effective way to acquire all the data needed. Also, this research solely depended on the information that was obtained from the chosen participants. These results were analysed based on the assumption that all the women responded honestly and accurately to all of the questions. However, it is possible that some participants may not have answered completely honestly and may instead have

answered as they believed they should. Thus this may lead to bias answers and results in biased research.

Another limitation that may have affected this study is the questionnaires that were chosen. The questionnaires used were The Revised Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (Quinn & Lewis, 2005), Self Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) and The Media Influence Scale (Stice et al, 1996) which was adapted from the Perceived Sociocultural Pressure Scale. These questionnaires may have limited the information which was obtained, and if other questionnaires were chosen instead they have collected a wider range of data. E.g. Noll and Fredrickson (1996) also developed a self-objectification questionnaire.

Implications of Research

In terms of future research, the limitations that are mentioned above should all be taken into consideration. Also an important aspect that should be considered for future reference is a hypothesis based around body dissatisfaction for older women. Much of the findings in the present study indicate that older women in contrast to much of the previous research, do suffer with body dissatisfaction and engage in self-surveillance. Therefore a hypothesis based around the present findings should be taken into account. Cory and Burns (2007) state that it is typically younger women who feel the most pressure from external sources including the media and fellow peers to conform to the ideal body for women. However Webster and Tiggemann (2003) report that while much of the previous research focuses on a limited number of women in college there is an increasing amount of evidence that older women are also suffering with body shame and the desire to be thinner. Thus the feeling of body shame remains stable across the lifespan. This idea therefore, needs to be taken into account in future research.

Conclusion

In today's society it is almost impossible to escape the vision of beauty which is depicted daily in society. This image which is portrayed throughout the media is generally one of thinness and youthfulness. It has now become a normal part of one's life to obsess about appearance and beauty (Cory & Burns, 2007). Body dissatisfaction among women, however it is certainly on the increase, it appears that this is largely down to the media. The overall purpose of this present study was to explore the medias influence on self-objectification on women of different ages. Much of the previous research has indicated that younger women suffer more in terms of self-objectification, lower self-esteem and increased body shame than older women (Webster & Tiggemann, 2003). However, surprisingly the findings from the present study are contrary to the majority of research that is currently available. This study has found that older women in fact scored higher mean scores for areas including; body surveillance and body shame than younger women. These findings go against much of the traditional views in society. Therefore it is evident in the present study that appearance concern does not decrease with age. However, also surprisingly the present research found that there was no correlation between body image and the media. This may suggest that on average, the participants were comfortable and satisfied with their bodies despite being exposed to the idealised body image in the media.

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Appendix 1

INSTRUCTIONS: Please read each statement below and circle number that best describes how much you agree or disagree with each one:

1 = strongly agree

2 = agree

3 = neither agree nor disagree

4 = disagree

5 = strongly disagree

1. I rarely think about how I look.....1 2 3 4 5

2. When I can't control my weight, I feel like something

must be wrong with me.....1 2 3 4 5

3. I think a person is pretty much stuck with the looks

they are born with.....1 2 3 4 5

4. I think it is more important that my clothes are comfortable

than whether they look good on me.....1 2 3 4 5

5. I feel ashamed of myself when I haven't made the
effort to look my best.....1 2 3 4 5

6. A large part of being in shape is having that kind of
body in the first place.....1 2 3 4 5

7. I think more about how my body feels than
how my body looks.....1 2 3 4 5

8. I feel like I must be a bad person when I don't
look as good as I could.....1 2 3 4 5

9. I think a person can look pretty much how they want
to if they are willing to work at it.....1 2 3 4 5

10. I rarely compare how I look with how other
people look.....1 2 3 4 5

11. I would be ashamed for people to know what

I really weigh.....1 2 3 4 5

12. I really don't think I have much control over how

my body looks.....1 2 3 4 5

13. During the day, I think about how I look many times.....1 2 3 4 5

14. I never worry that something is wrong with me when

I am not exercising as much as I should.....1 2 3 4 5

15. I think a person's weight is mostly determined by

the genes they are born with.....1 2 3 4 5

16. I often worry about whether the clothes I am

wearing make me look good.....1 2 3 4 5

17. When I'm not exercising enough, I question whether

I am a good enough person.....1 2 3 4 5

18. It doesn't matter how hard I try to change my weight

it's probably always going to be about the same.....1 2 3 4 5

19. I rarely worry about how I look to other people.....1 2 3 4 5

20. Even when I can't control my weight, I think

I'm an okay person.....1 2 3 4 5

21. I can weigh what I'm supposed to when

I try hard enough.....1 2 3 4 5

22. I am more concerned with what my body can

do than how it looks.....1 2 3 4 5

23. When I'm not the size I think I should be,

I feel ashamed.....1 2 3 4 5

24. The shape you are in depends mostly on your genes.....1 2 3 4 5

Appendix 2

INSTRUCTIONS: Please read the following statements and indicate how much you agree with them by circling the appropriate number to the right of the statement as follows:

1 = strongly agree

2 = agree

3 = disagree

4 = strongly disagree

1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others.....1 2 3 4

2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.....1 2 3 4

3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.....1 2 3 4

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.....1 2 3 4

5. I feel that I do not have much to be proud of.....1 2 3 4

6. I take a positive attitude towards myself.....1 2 3 4

7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.....1 2 3 4

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.....1 2 3 4

9. I certainly feel useless at times.....1 2 3 4

10. At times I think I am no good at all.....1 2 3 4

Appendix 3

INSTRUCTIONS: Please read each question and circle the appropriate number on your answer sheet. Please answer all questions.

1 = strongly agree

2 = agree

3 = neither agree nor disagree

4 = disagree

5 = strongly disagree

1. I like to read fashion magazines that feature thin models.

1 2 3 4 5

2. I like to watch fashion shows on T.V. that feature thin models.

1 2 3 4 5

3. When I see a picture of a female model or actress, I pay attention to her body shape.

1 2 3 4 5

4. I like to watch entertainment shows featuring thin celebrities.

1 2 3 4 5

5. I like to browse in malls and pay attention to the latest fashions.

1 2 3 4 5

6. If I could afford it, I would like to go to New York fashion shows.

1 2 3 4 5

7. I like to watch award shows on T.V. and admire the clothes worn by famous female stars.

1 2 3 4 5

8. I like to watch exercise/fitness videos and shows on T.V. featuring well toned women.

1 2 3 4 5

9. I like to watch movies with famous actresses.

1 2 3 4 5

10. I like to watch videos on MTV with popular music stars.

1 2 3 4 5