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The role of media and it's affect on Self Objectification, Body dissatisfaction and Self -Esteem

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Abstract

According to Frederickson's theory on self-objectification when women or men are exposed to images of sexual objectification these images are internalised creating an altered state of self-objectification.

In this study we employed an experimental in between design to investigate the effects of media exposure on participant levels of self-esteem, body dissatisfaction, trait and state self objectification. To collect this data we randomly allocated 35 females and 37 males into either the control or experimental condition levels. To measure effects of both variables pre & post manipulation of self-esteem and body dissatisfaction tests were administered before and after the advertisements. These students consisted both of full-time and part-time students ranging in ages from 18 to 40 years of age. In the control condition participants were shown neutral advertisements and in the experimental condition participants were shown advertisements containing the sexual objectification of both men. The results showed that by watching only 12 mins of advertisements containing sexual objectification in one single sitting levels of state self objectification increased significantly in comparison to watching neutral advertisements in both men and women. Along with increased states of self objectification were lower levels of self-esteem both men and women. In women only results showed significantly higher levels of body dissatisfaction when both compared against gender and the control condition

Introduction

Acting on the assumption that “sex appeal sells” advertisers bombard multiple media platforms with sexual imagery every day. Evidence suggests that advertising campaigns depicting women as sexual objects are becoming increasingly prevalent in our society (Sullivan & O’Connor, 1998). For example the sexual objectification of women in beer commercials is commonplace and furthermore brand names such as Calvin Klein, Victoria Secret, Dorse & Gabbana among others continually launch advertisement campaigns using sexual objectification which are extremely controversial in nature (Kilbourne, 1999). According to Kilbourne(1999)these advertisement campaigns are being used as shock tactics which results in more public attention which in turn leads to more exposure of these controversial images. This is exactly what the advertisement companies look for, since more attention increases the demand for the product. However, in this advertisement being only shown for a short period before being banned, is there any damaging effects for those watching them. A report by the APA task force in 2007 on the “sexualisation of children” found that there was plenty of evidence to show the presence of sexual objectification in Television, advertising, movies, sport magazines, video games, the internet and magazines. Its findings also included that in the studies reviewed it was women more so than men that were portrayed as sexual objects.

Along with the presence of sexual objectification in the media another feature which completes this form of communication in the media is the “thin ideal”. There is growing evidence suggesting that exposure to this form of visual imagery produces body images disturbances which can result in body shame, depression, diminished task performance and eating disorders (Harison & Frederickson, Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Noll & Frederickson, 1998, Calergo et al, 2007). However in contrast to these findings a study carried out by Zimmerman & Dahlberg(2008) which was a duplicate study of Ford , Latour & Lundstorm (1991) found statically significant results contradicting ford et al(1991) findings that advertisements including sexual objectification are highly offensive to women. Instead the study conducted by Zimmerman & Dahlberg when comparing mean levels of attitudes taken in the current study and comparing them to those taken in 1991, found that attitudes have become more accepting and forgiving of sexual objectification in the

media and accept that the images of women in the media are not representative of reality. This study however did not measure attitudes employing any psychological testing to explore if the exposure to these advertisements had in fact any short term or long term effects on psychological variables.

The Objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) provides a sociocultural framework for understanding and researching the experience of being female in a society that is obsessed with physical appearance. The theory by Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) is a detailed account of the processes involved in women's emotional and behavioral reactions to a sometimes brutal environment that places a higher emphasis on one's body or body parts than the actual identity of the person. . Frederickson & Roberts, 1997) theory assumes that women more so than men are predisposed to being over pre-occupied with their physical appearance. Sociocultural research suggests that physical attractiveness is rewarded by society; in that physical attractive women are seen as more socially competent with stronger interpersonal skills and, in general, there is a perceived assumption that what is beautiful is good (Dion et al, 1972) and physical attractive female applicants prove more successful than unattractive female applicants when applying for gender stereotyped feminine job positions (Cash, 1977, Patzer's 1985). The preoccupation that women have with their physical appearance and men's evaluative monitoring of the physical attractiveness in females according to evolutionary theories is required for the perpetuation of the species (Buss et al, 1993). This study by Buss et al, (1993) suggests that one of most influential attributes desired by a male while choosing a mate is physical attractiveness. And it is through the physical attractiveness of his chosen mate that he is capable of determining her reproductive value; however, in contrast, women tend to assert more importance on the physical strength of their male as opposed to his attractiveness. (Buss et al, 1993). Evidence of this was shown in a study involving male participants viewing several photos of attractive women after which results showed that men's tastes for physical attractiveness in other women had been significantly altered in women in general and in their actual romantic partners (Kendrick & Gutierrez, 1980).

To test the objectification model Kuring and Tiggemann (2004) carried out a study consisting of 286 undergraduate students consisting of 115 men and 171 women. Participants were administered a questionnaire which measured levels of self-objectification and self-surveillance along with levels of the psychological variables which Frederickson et al (1997) theoretically proposed were symptomatic of self-objectification which include body shame, appearance anxiety, flow and awareness of internal bodily states. To measure the body image disturbance the questionnaire also included measure of eating disorders and depression. This study provided support for Frederickson et al's (1997) mediational model in that self objectification leads to self-surveillance that, in turn, leads to body shame and appearance anxiety which are then manifested outwardly in increased levels of disordered eating and depressed mood. However this study was tested on a sample of non-clinical undergraduate students which would not be representative of the general public or of people who would suffer with extreme levels of eating disorder or depression. A further correlational study supporting the mediating relationship between self objectification and shame was conducted by McKinley and Hyde (1996). These results were consistent with Frederickson et al's (1997), and clearly showed that body

surveillance lead to body shame and there was a clear relationship between body shame and eating disorders. A replicate study of this correlational study was also conducted by Frederickson & Noll (2006) and the findings were consistent with McKinley and Hyde (1996) findings. Another correlational study showing a link between appearance and attitudes to exercise showed that appearance related reasons for exercises were negatively correlated to body dissatisfaction, body esteem and self esteem for both men and women (Strelan & Hargreaves, 2005)

An empirical review carried out by Morung & Huang (2008) found that while there was ample empirical evidence showing either the direct or mediational relationship between the internalised self objectification of women and its symptomatic consequential negative psychological variables as proposed by Frederickson et al (1997) there was not, however, much empirical evidence on external sexual objectification, and its effects on the states of objectification along with its associated psychological variables and the damaging effects on mental functioning. It would appear however that now more so than ever, every facet of our external environment is exploding with images and occurrences of sexual objectification. A study by the APA 2007 task force reported that in every area of the visual media they reviewed there was evidence of women being portrayed as images whose physical outward appearance encapsulates the personification of beauty itself, and the media then linking this unattainable image of perfection with the sexiness and the self-worth of a woman. There is a lot of empirical research suggesting that these unrealistic media portrayals of women play a contributing factor in the development and maintenance of body-image disturbances self-esteem, and eating pathologies. However most of this research does not use the objectification theory as a theoretical backdrop against which to explain the processes involved in these body image disturbances. Thus the aim of my study is to add to the existing research on external sexual objectification using the objectification theory to explain any altered psychological variables. This study will also test if media exposure can in fact prime self objectification, and if external sexual objectification can alter such traits like body satisfaction and self-esteem. Since this study is of an experimental design its strength of validity lies in the tests of self esteem and body dissatisfaction that will be taken before and after the media exposure. Thus any changes in these psychological variables can be directly linked to the media exposure stimulus. Also, most of the research carried out in the past has been carried out on undergraduate fulltime students consequently these results could not be applied to the general public. However, my study will include part-time and fulltime students ranging from age 18 to 40 years of age, and of all occupational backgrounds; thus capturing a more representative sample of the general public. Also, since the research on males and sexual objectification is quite limited, and tends to focus more on samples of men whose occupations or hobbies requires more of a focus on their physical appearance, this study will provide an insight into a more generalised sample of men than previous research. Finally this study will also provide further investigation into whether or not self-objectification is gender biased and if it is women who tend to suffer more from the effects of self objectification. This study is a between subjects experimental design and will compare changes in levels of state self objectification, self-esteem and body dissatisfaction between men and women. Empirical evidence also suggests that women with higher levels of trait self-objectification are more affected than men by self-objectification but we will also add further research to whether or not there is a gender effect (Frederickson et al, 1998). Limitations of this study will include the length of the advertisements, which

will be 12 minutes which is quite short. Another limitation is that there will only be ten advertisements altogether 5 being of men and five being of women, so this may not be enough exposure to sexual objectification to make a significant change if any. However ample evidence shows that states of self objectification can be primed by mere cues (Roberts and Gettman, 2004).

Correlational evidence supports the relationship between exposure to fashion magazines and body dissatisfaction (Harrison and Cantor), and eating disorders (Stice and Shaw, 1994). And, to further explain why some people are affected by commercials and not others. Heimberg & Thompson, (1995) carried out an experiment to test the effects of the thin ideals by allocating participants into two groups according to their predisposed level of body disturbances, socio-cultural attitudes and physical appearance. Results showed that participants who scored high on body dissatisfaction were less satisfied with their body after viewing appearance related advertisements in compared to those who scored lower on body disturbances. Also, participants with higher levels of body disturbance and/or high levels of acceptance of sociocultural attitudes regarding appearance became more depressed after viewing the appearance related advertisements. Thus suggesting that some people are more damaged by media exposure than others. However these correlational studies only tested the “thin ideal” and not the self objectification model, so further testing using self-objectification as a variable and testing for the symptomatic psychological variables that Frederickson et al(1997) proposed in the self-objectification along with the thin ideal could provide evidence for the link between the thin ideal and self-objectification.

To test if self objectification could be applied to research on the effects of exposure to this “thin ideal” which is prevalent in all areas of the media the first experimental study was conducted by Harper & Tiggmann(2007). In this experimental study results showed that state self objectification could be primed by images of thin-idealised images in magazines. Images of the attractive thin models generated a greater state of self objectification than the control advertisements. Results also showed that images of the attractive thin models condition also produced higher levels of body dissatisfaction, negative mood and weight appearance anxiety than control advertisements. These findings are consistent with Frederickson and Null (1997) in that exposure to these idealised appearance related images trigger self-objectification and, through adopting a third party perspective, comparisons are drawn, and since these images are by most of us unattainable failure occur, This repeated failure according to Seligman’s learned helplessness theory, produces frustration and negative thought processes. These images of physical beauty and perfection are internalised. Research carried out by Levine and Smolack showed that fashion models are 98% thinner than American women suggesting that Fashion models weight is clearly far removed from the weight of women in general. And according to Groesz, Levine, & Murnen, (2002) empirical evidence suggests that the these ideals of physical beauty that we are exposed to in the media become part of what we think we should look like, and when we fail to achieve this unattainable ideal that we have internalised negative body image disturbances occur.

The relationship between media exposure does not always produces negative body image disturbances since a study conducted by Myers & Biocca, (1992) found that watching advertisements and programs actually reduced depression levels in women

and reduced body weight discrepancies. Also another study carried out by Champion and Furham, (1999) found no significant changes in body dissatisfaction after being exposed to idealised media stimuli. . However a meta-analysis revealed a causal relationship between brief magazine exposure and body image disturbances in females (Groesz, Levine, & Murnen, 2002) which produced a small but significant statistical effect size of 0.30(Cohen, 1977). This meta- analysis was a study of the effects of the thin ideal and not self objectification; however it does provide significant evidence for the damaging effects of the media. In so far as that it examined 43 effects reported in 25 studies, and the results revealed that women who were exposed to idealized media images had significantly more body dissatisfaction than women who were exposed to control images. A study conducted by Baker, Towell, and Sivyver (1997) on visually impaired women measured the effects of the media on body dissatisfaction and eating attitudes. The results showed lower levels of body dissatisfaction and more positive eating attitudes in participants who were born blind in comparison to those who became blind and women who could see. However these findings might imply one of two meanings: the first being since they've never actually seen what they look like, they've nothing to compare against and second the visual media has a major influence in how we see and place value on ourselves.

According to Frederickson & Roberts (1997) the visual media is the most common method of depicting sexual objectification, and that viewing images portraying women as sex objects should trigger a state of self objectification in women which in doing so produces negative body image disturbances. Frederickson also proposed that the male gaze could also trigger self objectification in women. Furthermore, if research can show that mere words can prime sexual objectification (Roberts and Gettman 2004), visual media must surely have a stronger effect In an experiment conducted by Roberts and Gettman (2004) students unscrambled sentences with which were either sexual in content or body competence based, the results showed that by merely looking at sexual objectification words a state of self-objectification could be primed. These findings would suggest that it is extremely likely that exposure to sexual objectification in the media would increase self objectification. In addition a recent experiment demonstrated that sports media stimuli enhanced self-objectification in adolescent girls in the short term (Harrison & Fredrickson, 2003). Harrison and Frederickson also found that women who read sports magazines and not beauty magazines had lower levels of trait self-objectification than those women who did not. This result could be because the pictures in the sports magazine were more focused on non-lean sports which emphasize less on physical appearance and more on competency, co-ordination and strength (Petrie, 1996). Morry and Staska(2001) found a significant correlation between exposure to fashion magazines and trait self-objectification

Just as women are vulnerable to messages of sexual objectification that permeates our society, there is growing evidence to show that men's bodies are also increasingly being 'objectified' in the media and are becoming unrealistically muscular (Pope et al, 1999). In this correlational study looking at male models used in Playgirl magazines between 1973 and 1997 results showed that men are being depicted as more muscular with greatly exaggerated upper body muscles definition, an unattainable flat defined torso and greatly exaggerated narrow hips (Leit, Pope, & Gray, 2001; Pope *et al.*, 2000).). This "muscular ideal" is greatly exaggerated and

research shows that men are reporting higher levels of body dissatisfaction when correlated to tests on muscularity (McCreary & Sasse, 2000). Thus the second aim of this study is to test if the sexual objectification of men in the media can produce trigger states of self objectification, and according to the objectification theory (1997) this results in negative body image disturbances. Thus to test the negative image disturbances body dissatisfaction and self esteem will be measured. To access increased states of self objectification, scores on self objectification in the control condition will be compared against scores in the sexual objectification condition. According to Frederickson et al's (1998) research has shown that both men and women who tried on the swimsuit reported feelings of self consciousness and self objectification was higher in the swimsuit condition than the sweater condition. However, levels of self-objectification were significantly higher for women and only the women showed evidence of body shame and restrained eating (Fredrickson et al., 1998). However, in contrast to the objectification model that self objectification would lead to body shame, Fredrickson and colleagues (1998). A replicate study carried out by Gapinski, Brownell, and LaFrance (2003) also found that trying on swimwear led women, and not men, to experience body shame. A study conducted by Roberts & Gettman(2004) showed how both men and women were primed by mere words containing a sexual content when compared to word of a neutral content - objectification for both men and women than neutral words (Roberts & Gettman, 2004). This would suggest that if mere words can prime self-objectification, the visual media should have a stronger influence on men since men by their very nature are more attracted to visual stimuli.

In the past most studies that have examined the media's impact on male body image have focused on issues that would be more pertinent to women such as restrictive eating and drive for thinness and, consequently, findings reported little or no significant body image disturbances (McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2001). However current research shows that there is a growing emphasis in the media on men's physical appearance and to that end a " muscular ideal" is prevalent in magazines, video games, boy's toys , movies and commercials (Olivardia, Pope, & Hudson, (2000), Leit, Pope, & Gray, 2001; Pope *et al.*, (2000), Pope et al(1999). . Bodybuilders have been shown to exhibit similar levels of body-image disturbances and disordered eating as men with eating disorders (Mangweth, Pope, Kemmler, & Ebenbichler, 2001). However body building is extremely focused on physical appearance which could, according to Slater and Tiggeman's (2000) findings, produce these negative body image effects. Also, a study completed by Petrie (1996) revealed that athletes who participated in lean sports which are more focused on physical appearance are more concerned with their weight and dieting than athletes who participated in non lean sports. These findings are consistent with Tiggemann and Slater (2000) whose study revealed that ballet dancers had higher levels of self-objectification, body shame, appearance anxiety, and disordered eating than controls . In contrast to body builders, male weightlifters who are in a very physical and appearance focused sport show little eating disorder pathology (Olivardia, Pope, & Hudson, 2000). However as report from Petrie (1996) findings this could be attributed by the varying focus of these sports. For example weight lifting is more concerned with competence and functional strength whereas body building by very definition is only concerned with the appearance of the body in relation to size of the muscles. To test if men are affected by sexual objectification this study will use the objectification model in which to explain the mechanisms involved in negative body image

disturbances, if any. Although originally developed to investigate the steps involved in women's emotional and behavioral responses to meet Western cultural ideals of physical appearance, the framework can also be applied to men (Tiggemann & Kuring, 2004)..

Hypothesis 1: Controlling for trait levels and for pre manipulation scores of self esteem and body dissatisfaction of self-objectification females viewing sexual idealised images of females will exhibit higher states of self-objectification, body dissatisfaction and lower self-esteem than male participants viewing sexual idealised images of males.

Hypothesis 2: Controlling for trait levels of self-objectification and for pre-manipulation scores of self-esteem and body dissatisfaction levels of state self objectification, self-esteem and body dissatisfaction will be higher in the experimental condition than the control condition.

Method

Type of design.

This study employed a between subjects experimental design with a control condition and an experimental condition. There were 20 females and 21 males randomly allocated to the experimental condition and there were 15 females and 16 males randomly allocated to the control condition. There were two Independent conditions which were the sexualised advertisements shown in the experimental condition and the neutral advertisements showing in the control condition. The dependent variables included measures of self-objectification, Self-esteem and Body dissatisfaction.

Participants

Participants consisted of 72 full-time and part-time undergraduate participants consisting of 37 males and 35 females ranging from 18 to 40 years of age , with a mean age of 24.77 (SD=7.64).

Aparatus

Stimulus materials were popular TV commercials which had been shown on satellite and cable channels over the period of 2 years. These advertisements were downloaded from Youtube and saved onto a USB stick and a DVD CD. The advertisements were either shown to participants via a laptop or an overhead projector

depending on location of experiment.

Procedure

To test the content for sexual objectification a convenience sample of 5 people consisting of 3 men and 2 women viewed 16 advertisements and were asked to pick 5 adverts denoting the sexual objectification of women and 5 adverts denoting the sexual objectification of men. The advertisements chosen for the experimental condition were agreed by all participants to denote sexual objectification. The advertisements shown for the control condition contained no images containing sexual objectification and mainly consisted of images of cars, children, food and animals in fact only 2 advertisements showed men and women but they were shown in a completely neutral sense without any evidence either gender being idealised or sexualised. The advertisements were solely chosen by the experimenter.

There were 10 advertisements in each condition and the media stimulus was 12 minutes in duration for each condition. In the experimental condition the 5 adverts showing the sexual objectification of men were randomly mixed in with the 5 adverts showing sexual objectification of women thus there was no sequential order and each advertisement occurred randomly. There were no stops or intervals in between any of the commercials one just flowed into the next. All advertisements' were presented as they've would've been on television with both audio and visual output

All participants signed their own informed consent forms prior to testing. The consent forms included a brief explanation of the experiment which noted that there would be depending on condition allocated content of a sexual nature which may or may not found to be offensive. However, it was also mentioned that the content of the advertisements alluded to visual messages that are available to us on billboards, magazines, advertisements or television programming on any given day. Experiment had to be carried out several times in either classrooms or canteens but the procedure used was identical. Once informed consent forms was signed they were collected, and then the first booklet was handed out. This booklet contained the Rosenberg self-esteem test, trait self objectification questionnaire, ESI -3 body satisfaction subscale test, and a demographic questionnaire including questions on age and gender only. After completing the first booklet participants were asked to watch the commercial presentation and fill in the provided Advertisement questionnaire. Once the advertisements were completed the first booklets were collected and the second booklet was handed out. This booklet contained states of self-objectification questionnaire, EDI-3 Body Dissatisfaction Questionnaire and the Rosenberg self Esteem Questionnaire. Each booklet was numbered and the 1st and 2nd booklets were matched according to the numbers, so that when entering data the 1st and 2nd booklet was matched with that the corresponding participant. After the experiment was completed participants were handed a debriefing letter and thanked for their time.

Materials.

To ensure that participants were viewing advertisements they were each provided

with an “Advertisement Effectiveness Questionnaire” regardless of the condition they were allocated to. They were asked to rank each advertisement in order of how effective and interesting they found each commercial with 1 being the least effective and 10 being most effective. This questionnaire acted as a manipulation technique to ensure that participants would pay close attention to each commercial.

To test trait self objectification the self-objectification questionnaire developed by Noll & Frederickson(1998) was used to measure trait self objectification. Participants were asked to rank ten attributes with 1 being the least important and 10 being the most important. The questionnaire included five physical competence type questions and five physical appearance type questions. The sum total for the competence based questions was subtracted from the sum total of physical based questions. The scores ranged from -25 being the lowest in trait self objectification and 25 being the highest in trait self objectification.

To test State self- objectification a modified version of the twenty statement test used by Frederickson et al(1998) was used. According to Frederickson et al(1998) state self objectification can change depending on the situation the person find themselves in. Participant were asked to describe themselves by complete the 20 sentences which could best describe themselves. When participants asked for more direction they were instructed that there were no right or wrong answers and in as little or as many words to describe about themselves anything beginning with the sentence “I am”. These instructions were also printed on the test. Two Independent coders oblivious to any details of the experiments categorized participants responses into 6 categories (1) Body Shape and Size, (2) other physical appearance, (3)physical competence, (4)traits or abilities, (5)states or emotions and (6)states or emotions . The number of time participants referred to (1) body shape and size, and (2) other physical appearance was how state objectification was measure. The two raters used both agreed on the categorization of 92.5% of the answers. The state self objectification range was possible 0-20 however there was an average of thirteen responses.

To measure body dissatisfaction the body dissatisfaction subscale for the Eating Disorder Inventory-3was administered to participants before and after media stimulus across both conditions. The test consisted of 10 items that measure the discontentment with overall shape. For each item, participants were asked to decide which was most relevant to them by circleing the corresponding letter in the question related to them: **Always (A), Usually (U), Often(O), Sometime(S), Rarely(R), or Never(N)**. For example if your rating for an item is OFTEN, you would circle the “O” for that item on the Answer Sheet. The Body dissatisfaction scores ranged from 0 being most satisfied with your body to 40 being most dissatisfied with your body.

To test self esteem Rosenberg self esteem test was used and was administered to applicant before and after the media stimulus test. The Rosenberg test consists of a ten itemed Likert scale with items answered on a four point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree Participant answered by circling **SA**. (If agree with the statement). The self-esteem scores range in score from 0 being extreme low in self-esteem to 30 being extremely high in self-esteem.

Results.

Participant ages ranged from 18 to 40, with a mean age of 24.77 (SD=7.64). Initially there were 80 applicants but 8 were removed for the following reasons: 3 returned questionnaires were incomplete; 3 of participants' scores were showing extreme outliers and would've altered results significantly and lastly the 2 remaining participants were 51 years of age and this might've resulted in completely different answers to the majority of the sample. The Mean trait objectification scores were -.95 in the experimental condition and 1.0 in the control condition. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to check for significance among trait self objectification across conditions and no significant difference was found in trait self objectification across conditions ($F(1,70)=.001, p=.976$). Preliminary checks were conducted to ascertain if trait objectification played a moderating effect with manipulation stimulus. No such effect existed so trait self-objectification was entered in as a co-variate in order to remove the effects of underlying individual differences. A series of two-way ANOVAs were carried out.

Effects of Experimental condition on State self Objectification

To determine if there were any significant differences in state self objectification across the experimental and control condition for males and females, an Independent t-test was conducted. The sample data file was split by gender so that any analysis of males and females could be carried out separately. In support of hypothesis 2, females had significantly higher states of self objectification in the experimental group ($m=4.2, sd=2.8; t(28.91)=3.39, p=.002$) compared to females in the control group ($m=1.86, sd=1.30$). However, although the mean level is slightly higher for males in the experimental condition, there was no significant difference found in levels of state self objectification for males in the experimental condition ($m=2.42, sd=1.77; t(35)=1.53, p=.13$) compared with the control condition ($m=1.86, sd=1.30$). Another t-test was carried out to investigate if there was a statistical significant relationship between males and females in levels of state self objectification, and it was found that there was a significant relationship between females ($m=4.2, sd=2.68; t(32.72)=2.47, p=.019$) and males ($m=2.42, sd=1.77$) in the experimental condition which supports hypothesis 1.

Another independent T-test was conducted to check if levels of state self objectification were higher for all participants in the experimental condition in comparison to the control condition. Levels of state self objectification were significantly higher for participants in the experimental condition ($m=3.29, sd=2.41; t(63.23)=3.52, p=.001$) compared with the control condition ($m=1.74, sd=1.26$), supporting Hypothesis 2.

Effects of Experimental condition on Self-Esteem.

Pre and Post manipulation scores were available for Self Esteem and in addition to trait self objectification, pre- manipulation scores were entered as co-variants. To determine if there was a significant difference in scores for females and males in the experimental group in comparison to the control group while controlling for trait self objectification and pre-manipulation self-esteem scores we conducted a two- way anova. Preliminary checks were carried out to ensure that assumptions of linearity, normality, reliable measurement of the co-variant, homogeneity of variance and regression slopes were not violated. Adjusting for trait self objectification and pre manipulation self-esteem scores. The analysis of co-variance showed no significant interaction effect between post manipulation self-esteem scores in experimental ($F(1,66)=.288, p=.593$). The main effect for gender had no statistical significance ($F(1,66)=167, p=.685$) and condition ($F(1,66)=1.70, p=.196$) . However mean levels for post manipulation self-esteem show that female in the experimental condition have lower score (adj m= 19.84, sd=.662) than when compared to the control condition (adj m= 21.16, sd=.766). Males also show lower scores in the experimental condition (adj m= 19.55, sd=.650) than in the control condition(adj m=20.44, sd=.743) however these did not reach statistical significance.

Effects of Experimental condition on EDI Body Dissatisfaction.

While adjusting for trait self objectification and pre-manipulation EDI scores a two way anova analysis was conducted. There was a statistical main effect for gender ($F(1,66)=4.86, p=.031$) supporting hypothesis 1 and there was also a statistical significant main effect for condition($F(1,66)=5.51, p=.027$) supporting hypothesis 1. However the interaction effect ($F(1,66)=3.59, p=.062$) did not reach statistical significance suggesting that only one gender and one condition was difference in variance to EDI body dissatisfaction. A one- way anova was carried out to show which condition the variance in gender was. Body satisfaction scores taken before manipulation stimulus and trait state self objectification scores were entered as co-variants. Splitting the data file by condition the results showed that there was a significance difference in the main effect for gender in the experimental condition in post body dissatisfaction ($F(1,27)=9.5, p=.004$) but not for the control condition($F(1,27)=.005, p=.945$) Females in the experimental condition show higher mean levels of post manipulation body dissatisfaction (adj M=20.60) in comparison to mean levels of post manipulation body dissatisfaction in males(adj M=10.23) supporting hypothesis 1. The control condition shows body dissatisfaction post manipulation mean levels of (adjM=16.73) in females but the mean levels of body dissatisfaction in males appear to be higher in the control condition suggesting that the experimental post manipulation stimulus did not increase body dissatisfaction in men.

State Self Objectification as a mediator

To determine if state self objectification was a mediator between body dissatisfaction and self-esteem a linear regression was conducted. The data did not meet the requirements put forward by Baron and Kenny's (1986) that the mediator would affect the dependent variable. State self objectification was not statically significant to body dissatisfaction($r=.18$, $p>0.5$) or self-esteem($r =.196$, $p>0.5$). As the requirements were not satisfied mediation was not conducted.

Discussion

The present study investigated the effects of the media in both men and women on states of self objectification, self esteem and body dissatisfaction by showing images of sexual objectified men and women in the experimental condition and comparing it with any effect neutral adverts had on these psychological variables. This study hypothesized that the effects of the sexual objectification media stimuli would result in higher levels of state self objectification, body dissatisfaction and lower levels of self esteem. The results do in fact support hypothesis 1 in that state self objectification in females was clearly increased by sexualized images in relation to state self objectification in male participant. Also, in support of hypothesis 1 there was a significant difference in body dissatisfaction scores between men and women along with lower levels of self esteem.

The present findings contribute to the existing literature in four different ways. Firstly there is ample correlationl research being carried out on self -objectification but there is very little experimental research, and while correlational is beneficial in its practice it does not imply causation. This experiment was able to test the directs effects on sexual objectification by firstly introducing it as an external variable as opposed to an internalized psychological variable, which according to research conducted by Frederickson et al(1998) triggers self-objectification. Also, in taking measures of self-esteem and body satisfaction before and after the media stimulus in each condition, the findings could clearly imply if whether or not the manipulation variable had a direct causation effect.

Secondly, while there is ample evidence of internalized sexual objectification, and its negative impact on body image, the research on external sexual objectification is extremely sparse as noted in an empirical review by Morang et al(2008). However, there is ample evidence to show that sexual objectification permeates through the very core of our society and while the main focus is primarily women, there is also evidence to show that men are increasingly becoming targets for self objectification (McCreary & Sasse, 2000, Strelan & Hargreaves 2005, Pope et al, 1999 & Mangweth, Pope, Kemmler, & Ebenbichler, (2001). Thus more studies that use external sources of sexual objectification and test it employing an experimental design are required to further investigate the triggering of self-objectification. Longitudinal experiments would provide in-depth knowledge into the potential factors at work in self objectification.

Thirdly this experiment was quite original in it's design in that within the one condition both men and women were exposed to sexual objectification thus each

gender were subject to the gaze effect as mentioned in Frederickson et al's (1998) study. According to Frederick et al (1997) the gaze is a more subtle and less damaging form of sexual objectification but can still trigger self objectification. It involves an evaluation of one's physical self those creating self-consciousness which can also lead to self-objectification. Thus one could speculate that participants were exposed to two forms of sexual objectification within the one condition. As predicted, females had significantly higher levels of state self-objectification and body dissatisfaction whereas men did not show any significant differences in any of the three psychological variables. However they did show a slight increase in state self objectification but this did not however reach statistical significance, which is consistent with previous research (Frederickson et al, 1998, Gapinski, Brownell, and LaFrance, 2003). However, even though Tiggemann & Kuring (2004) tested this mediation model on both males and female participants and found that self objectification for both males and females correlated with self-surveillance, self objectification was not correlated with body shame, appearance anxiety, flow, disorder eating or depressed mood for men. However the results showed that instead of body shame increasing with higher traits of self objectification which is consistent with previous research on body shame and trait self objectification for women (Frederickson et al, 1998) instead body shame increased with lower levels of trait self objectification which would suggest that questions on more physically competent attributes caused body shame in men. Thus the findings of this study would suggest that men's focus would appear to be based on the "muscular ideal" as opposed to attributes based on physical appearance, which is supported by research (Pope et al, 1999 & Mangweth, Pope, Kemmler, & Ebenbichler, 2001). Thus a weakness of this study would be that both the trait self objectification questionnaire and the state self-objectification are based on physical appearance as opposed to physical competence. Also the body dissatisfaction questionnaire is also based on physical attractiveness as opposed to physical competence.

And lastly, the findings add to existing literature in that the sample base includes both undergraduates full-time and undergraduates in part-time study; thus providing a range of ages from 18 to 40 years from all various background and occupations. This is original since the majority of the existing literature has been tested on undergraduate ranging in age from 18 to 22. Thus the experiment offered a sample base which was more representative of the general public to test the objectification theory on. However while the age range is advantageous to existing research another limitations of the study was the number of participants in the sample which was only seventy two. There were forty one participants in the experimental condition and thirty one in the control condition, whereas if the sample size had been bigger, the results might've reached more significance. Initially there were 80 participants but due to incomplete Questionnaire forms, potential outliers which could've unfairly altered result along with 2 potential age extreme outliers our sample size was reduced to seventy two.

Although self-esteem levels were higher in the experimental condition than the control condition they were not significantly affected suggested that short term cues of primed self objectification did not significantly change self esteem. However, if just only 12 minutes of advertisements can alter the levels of self-esteem even slightly, what is worrying is to what extent the repeated daily exposure to various visual stimuli denoting sexual objectification might do. According to the APA task

force (2007) women more so than men are sexually objectified in magazines, television, music videos, the internet, video game. This would suggest that women are subjected to a lot of sexually objectified images on a daily basis. If more experimental research was carried out on samples of the general public showing the damaging effects that these visual media message are having on levels of depression, eating disorder pathology along with depleted task performance as a result of not meeting this unattainable “ideals”, public attention would be then focused in on this, and pressure groups might play a persuasive role in ethical committee reviewing the standards that are currently considered acceptable.

Also Fredrickson et al(1997) refer to Seligman’s theory of helplessness in so far that body shame could be explained by the theory of helplessness. This theory proposes helplessness is something that is learned over a lifetime, it does not happen overnight. Its results from having very negative coping strategies, and when things don’t happen the way they should, instead of learning more effective means of overcoming obstacles, and treating it as a challenge we accept defeat. To combat this learned helplessness, Selgiman proposes that through adopting more positive, realistic coping mechanism, learned helplessness can be eliminated. Seligman proposes that depression can result from learned helplessness. Frederickson’s et al’s (1997) objectification theory suggests that women are more sexually objectified than men resulting in more pressure to conform to an unattainable ideal. Frederickkson et al (1997) suggests that this pressure to strive for an unattainable ideal, and then falling short of these ideals each time could, according to the theory, result in learned helplessness. Thus education programs designed to educate teenagers and young adults in the dangers of the media could help prevent the damaging effects that constant exposure to sexual objectification can do. Also, in adopting Seligman’s counter measure against “learned helplessness” this might reduce depression and potential negative body image disturbances in boy and girls who would otherwise be naturally predisposed to the damaging effects. However this would involve educating parents to the perils of the media, and the damaging effects of learned helplessness from the child’s early years as Seligman proposes that it is how peers and children’s role models interact with children that provides the basis for the development of coping strategies in general.

To ensure the credibility of results of this experiment two additional steps were taken. Firstly to ensure that the advertisements in the experimental condition a convenience consisting of 5 people who were independent from the experiment. The testers were asked to view 16 advertisements and were asked to pick 5 adverts denoting the sexual objectification of women and 5 adverts denoting the sexual objectification of men. The advertisements chosen for the experimental condition were agreed by all participants to denote sexual objectification. Secondly to ensure that close attention was paid to all the commercial, participants were given an advertisement questionnaire and asked to rank each advert from scale of 1 being least important to 10 being most important for effectiveness and interest. This test was only used as a manipulation technique to ensure participants paid focus and attention to each advert. In conclusion this study was also beneficial to the existing literature on self-objectification in that it provided further evidence for the existence of sexual objectification in the media and its damaging effect on body satisfaction and self-esteem levels in women. Also, the more research carried out on this issue that better chance there is for eliminating these damaging effects either through education or more long time strategies like changing

how we can behave. And through changing the way one behaves to the adverts one might learn to adopt a more positive and realistic attitude to this sexual objectification, so that we might change the way we feel about these visual messages and the potential negative psychological effects that they have on us.

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