



This girl can #jointhemovement: Effectiveness of physical functionality-focused campaigns for women's body satisfaction and exercise intent

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 7 February 2017

Received in revised form

23 November 2017

Accepted 29 November 2017

Keywords:

Media campaign

Physical functionality satisfaction

Appearance satisfaction

Social comparison

Exercise

Body functionality

ABSTRACT

We tested the effectiveness of exposure to two functionality-focused media campaigns, *This Girl Can* and *#jointhemovement*, in improving state appearance and physical functionality satisfaction, exercise intent, and protecting against exposure to idealised imagery. Across two studies, 339 ($M_{age} = 24.94$, $SD = 4.98$) and 256 ($M_{age} = 26.46$, $SD = 5.50$) women viewed the campaign or control video, followed by images of models who were posed or physically active, or images of landscapes. State satisfaction and exercise intent was measured at pre-test, post-video, post-images, and 1-week follow-up. Social comparison was measured at post-images. Viewing either campaign produced higher appearance satisfaction and exercise intentions than the control video. Effects weren't maintained after viewing idealised imagery or 1 week later. Further, the campaigns did not decrease social comparisons when viewing idealised imagery. Results can inform agencies about campaign effectiveness and suggest that women benefit from campaigns that feature non-idealised depictions of women exercising.

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1. Introduction

Body image is influenced by a variety of sociocultural factors (Thompson, Heinberg, Altabe, & Tantleff-Dunn, 1999) with media effects noted as particularly deleterious (Grabe, Ward, & Hyde, 2008). However, there is potential for media to transmit positive body image ideals and strategies for women to engage in adaptive, healthy behaviours (e.g., enjoyable physical activity), and self-care. Here, we explore the effectiveness of two recent functionality-focused media campaigns on women's appearance and physical functionality satisfaction, intentions to exercise, social comparison, and response to idealised images of women in a posed or active stance.

One way through which the impact of the media may be understood is via body conceptualisation theory (Franzoi, 1995). This theory argues that the body can be viewed as either a passive

object with a focus on its aesthetic value, that is, body-as-object (BAO) or as an active entity with a focus on the body's capabilities, that is, body-as-process (BAP; Franzoi, 1995). Objectification Theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) similarly proposes that through socialisation processes such as sexualised commentary women come to value their own body based predominantly on its physical appearance, as opposed to their personal qualities and body functionality. The experience of self-objectification can trigger body dissatisfaction, lowered mood, and disordered eating (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Media ideals are one powerful socialisation process with social comparison thought to explain women's body dissatisfaction in response to viewing idealised images (Dittmar & Howard, 2004). Social comparison theory proposes that individuals have an innate tendency to compare themselves with similar others as a means to evaluate one's own attributes (Festinger, 1954). Upward comparisons towards targets that are perceived as superior and unattainable can create a discrepancy between a viewer's actual and ideal physiques that leads to self-objectification and negative psychological outcomes (Tiggemann & Polivy, 2010; Want, 2009).

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Following from these theories, we consider approaches to improving women's body image by encouraging them to focus on their body functionality. Body functionality refers to everything that the body can do and is a critical component of body appreciation and positive body image (Abbott & Barber, 2011; Franzoi, 1995; Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015). In this paper we focus on the physical functionality of the body which can be displayed via exercise.

To date, body image media research has focused predominantly upon female models presented as objectified posed and passive objects to be viewed, for example, the focus on thin-ideal in the meta-analysis of Grabe et al. (2008). However, the cultural ideal of women's bodily attractiveness is becoming more muscular and toned (Homan, McHugh, Wells, Watson, & King, 2012; Thompson, van den Berg, Roehrig, Guarda, & Heinberg, 2004). Thus, an athletic and active, albeit still idealised form, is now commonplace (Homan, 2010) and is often presented as a 'healthier' alternative with a focus on fitness (e.g., Webb et al., 2017) compared to the traditional thin-ideal.

Researchers have argued that an emphasis on the functionality of the body may help women to be less focused on aesthetic concerns and ward off self-objectification (Franzoi, 1995; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Indeed, correlational studies have found that women who placed greater emphasis on the functionality of their bodies reported less negative mood and body-esteem problems (Abbott & Barber, 2010; Wasylikiw & Butler, 2014). Appreciation of one's functionality has also been correlated with a range of positive experiences such as intuitive eating, holding a broad conceptualisation of beauty, components of self-compassion, and life satisfaction (Alleva, Tylka, & Kroon Van Diest, 2017).

The benefits of functionality may however breakdown when women are exposed to imagery of women displaying the physical functionality of their bodies in an idealised manner. Experimental findings have shown that images of models who are presented in a physically active context, but are still attractive and thin, elicit the same negative impact upon women's body dissatisfaction as images of models that are presented in more traditional posed forms (Mask, Blanchard, & Baker, 2014; Mulgrew & Hennes, 2015; Mulgrew & Tiggemann, 2016; Robinson et al., 2017; Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2015). One potential explanation is that regardless of whether the model is posed or physically active, women have been socialised to focus on appearance dimensions (Mulgrew & Hennes, 2015; Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2015). Alternatively, images focused on physical fitness capacities may maintain a focus on thinness and body tone, which can provide a further unachievable standard for women to accomplish (Mask et al., 2014). Thus, evidence to date suggests that idealised depictions of women can trigger negative body image outcomes, regardless of the context in which they are presented. However, there remains only a small number of experimental studies which have explicitly compared active versus posed depictions and therefore we consider both styles in the current study. Exposure to non-idealised depictions of women exercising may produce better outcomes via encouraging women to focus on their body functionality.

Recent research has examined whether encouraging women to focus on the functionality component of their own body (Alleva, Martijn, Jansen, & Nederkoorn, 2014; Alleva, Martijn, Van Breukelen, Jansen, & Karos, 2015; Alleva, Veldhuis, & Martijn, 2016) or the physical functionality of a model's body (Mulgrew & Tiggemann, 2016) might mitigate negative body image outcomes. A functionality focus may help individuals to view the body in a more holistic manner (Alleva et al., 2015) with a focus on what the body can do rather than how it looks. Alleva et al. (2014, 2015, 2016) have developed and refined a writing task wherein respondents write about the various functions of their body such as movement, health, and relationships, and how these functions are personally mean-

ingful. Initially, Alleva et al. (2014) found that a single-session of the functionality-focused writing task requiring 100 words did not decrease undergraduate women's body dissatisfaction, although decreases were noted for older women aged 30–50 years. An expanded three session version of the writing task, each session lasting 15 min, used in a later study resulted in increased body satisfaction, and less self-objectification for young adult women who reported body dissatisfaction (Alleva et al., 2015). Completion of a 15-min single session functionality writing task was also found to offer some protective benefits to functionality satisfaction and body appreciation when viewing posed and idealised images, but did not extend to appearance satisfaction (Alleva et al., 2016). Using a focus on physical functionality domains (e.g., health, physical ability, well-functioning body), Mulgrew and Tiggemann (2016) found that reflections on a model's physical functionality, comparisons to idealised models across physical functionality elements, or functional fitness style images produced poorer body image outcomes than aesthetic-based analogues. Therefore, when it comes to some aspects of physical capacities, women may have difficulty in separating the functional and appearance elements of their own and other's bodies.

'Fitspirational' images are one such example of the mixture between a physical functionality and appearance focus, with idealised images of women either in posed or active forms, which are viewed for fitness inspiration on social media. Tiggemann and Zaccardo (2015) found that appearance comparisons fully mediated the effect of 'fitspiration' images on body image, suggesting that negative effects were compounded when women viewed the fitness models as more attractive than themselves. Interestingly, women in this study reported being more inspired to exercise after viewing the fitspiration images. Similarly, Robinson et al. (2017) found that the women in their study also increased in their intentions to exercise, but this did not translate into actual exercise behaviour in a lab setting. These authors suggested that a more naturalistic test of whether these images increase levels of exercise is needed. Exposure to campaigns which focus on 'everyday' women exercising may model a healthier approach to exercise and encourage women to reflect upon and improve the functionality of their bodies (Daniels, 2009, 2012; Wasilenko, Kulik, & Wanic, 2007). We therefore tested whether exposure to less idealised depictions of women engaging in exercise may also produce the same increased exercise intentions as has been noted with exposure to idealised depictions. We also examined changes to actual exercise behaviour (Study 2) across the following week to allow women to exercise in natural settings.

Franzoi (1995) originally suggested that encouraging women to participate in physical activity may shift a self-objectified object orientation to one where a woman can appreciate her body's functionality, encourage physical competence, and improve body-esteem. Correspondingly, women who had more conversations about exercise reported greater body appreciation (Wasylikiw & Butler, 2014). Meta-analytic research has demonstrated small to moderate effect sizes for the efficacy of exercise interventions designed to improve body satisfaction (Campbell & Hausenblas, 2009). However exercise type moderates this relationship, as cardio-based exercise has been related to self-objectification, disordered eating, and poorer body esteem whereas yoga participation was associated with lower self-objectification (Prichard & Tiggemann, 2008). Thus, only certain types and reasons for exercise are associated with positive body image outcomes (Campbell & Hausenblas, 2009; Prichard & Tiggemann, 2008). Peer influence may also modify this relationship, as women were found to exercise more and reported greater body satisfaction when in the proximity of a normal-fit peer or unfit peer, whilst those who exercised near an ultra-fit peer exercised less (Wasilenko et al., 2007). That is, self-evaluation that occurs through either upward or downward

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