



The effects of advertisements that sexually objectify women on state body dissatisfaction and judgments of women: The moderating roles of gender and internalization



Ross Krawczyk^{a,b,*}, J. Kevin Thompson^b

^a The College of Saint Rose, Department of Psychology, 432 Western Ave, Albany, NY 12203, USA

^b University of South Florida, Department of Psychology, 4202 E Fowler Ave, Tampa, FL 33620, USA

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 5 September 2014
Received in revised form 27 July 2015
Accepted 3 August 2015
Available online 9 September 2015

Keywords:

State body dissatisfaction
Sexual objectification
Gender
Internalization of appearance ideals
Media exposure

ABSTRACT

Experimental studies have demonstrated that exposure to idealized images of women increases state body image disturbance. However, little work has experimentally examined the effects of exposure to images that sexually objectify women, especially as it relates to women and men's state body dissatisfaction and judgments of women. In the current study, 437 women and men were randomly assigned to view advertisements that sexually objectify women and portray appearance ideals, or to view non-appearance-related advertisements. Results indicated that state body dissatisfaction increased for women and men exposed to advertisements that sexually objectified women, although this effect was larger for women. Trait internalization of appearance ideals moderated this effect, indicating that women and men with higher internalization exhibited greater state body dissatisfaction after viewing women sexually objectified in advertisements. Exposure to women sexually objectified in advertisements did not affect women's or men's attractiveness or competence ratings of women in university advertisements.

© 2015 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Introduction

Western culture sets forth unrealistic appearance ideals, specifically the thin ideal for women and the muscular ideal for men (Thompson, Heinberg, Altabe, & Tantleff-Dunn, 1999b). In the U.S. and many other Western societies, the media are a reflection of the sociocultural environment and an ever-present influence in the lives of people of all ages (Comstock & Scharrer, 2007; Harris, 2013). Western media frequently portray cultural appearance ideals, which in turn may lead to body image disturbance (Herbozo, Tantleff-Dunn, Gokee-Larose, & Thompson, 2004; Levine & Murnen, 2009; Pope, Phillips, & Olivardia, 2000), which is defined as a disruption in the way a person perceives his or her appearance, and includes such constructs as body dissatisfaction, appearance anxiety, and body shame (Thompson, Covert, & Stormer, 1999; Wertheim, Paxton, & Blaney, 2004). Many researchers (e.g., Levine & Murnen, 2009) have questioned the causal nature of the relationship between media exposure and body dissatisfaction, suggesting that the relationship is complicated by other factors such as a predisposition to body dissatisfaction (Ferguson, 2013).

Objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) may help to explain the complex relationship between media and body image disturbance, stating that women in Western culture are chronically sexualized and objectified, or valued for their appearance as a body for consumption by others. The theory holds that through cultural forces, especially media that continuously sexualize and objectify the female body, women are pushed to internalize the extreme value placed on appearance (Buote, Wilson, Strahan, Gazzola, & Papps, 2011). The purpose of the current study is to test the effects of specific types of media, advertisements that sexualize and objectify women, on state body dissatisfaction. It aims to examine the roles of appearance ideal internalization and gender within this relationship. Sexual objectification devalues women's worth by reducing them to sexual objects (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). It also operates interpersonally by influencing others' perceptions of women (Heflick & Goldenberg, 2009). This study aims to extend these findings, to test the effects of advertisements that sexually objectify women on judgments of women's attractiveness and competence.

Media and Body Image Disturbance

The relationship between Western media and body image disturbance is well documented by studies using non-experimental and observational methodology (e.g., Becker, 2004; Becker,

* Corresponding author at: 432 Western Avenue, Albany, NY 12203, USA. Tel.: +1 518 454 2006.

E-mail address: krawczyr@strose.edu (R. Krawczyk).

Burwell, Herzog, Hamburg, & Gilman, 2002; Levine & Harrison, 2004). Grabe, Ward, and Hyde (2008) performed a meta-analysis of correlational studies and found small-to-medium effect sizes between television exposure and body dissatisfaction, thin-ideal internalization, and disordered eating. Murnen, Levine, Groesz, and Smith (2007) found similar results in a meta-analysis examining magazine reading and body dissatisfaction. Recent correlational research has expanded upon these findings, revealing that exposure to fashion magazines, sexualizing television, and social networking site use was associated with higher body image disturbance among adolescent girls (Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2012), while exposure to sexualizing television and pornographic websites was associated with higher body image disturbance among boys (Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2013). However, the putative causal relationship between media and body image disturbance requires further exploration due to the complex, multifaceted constructs of body image and eating disorders, which have genetic, biological, and environmental determinants (Bulik, 2004; Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002). Therefore, experimental research is more appropriate than correlational studies to estimate the links between media and body dissatisfaction.

Groesz, Levine, and Murnen (2002) conducted a meta-analysis of experimental studies with female samples examining the effects of viewing media images on state body dissatisfaction. They found that participants who viewed thin-ideal images, as opposed to average size models, plus size models, or inanimate objects, exhibited greater state body dissatisfaction. More recent experimental studies have found similar results (e.g., Harper & Tiggemann, 2008; Swami & Smith, 2012). Levine and Murnen (2009) reviewed the existing evidence and concluded that media exposure predicts state body dissatisfaction, but that this relationship is complicated by the interaction of multiple other factors such as genetic influences and family and peer norms. They also concluded that the relationship may not be causal due to a poverty of evidence demonstrating temporal precedence of media exposure leading to body image disturbance. Most recently, Ferguson (2013) conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis and concluded that media exposure significantly affects state body dissatisfaction only for those with a predisposition toward trait body dissatisfaction, and that these effect sizes are typically small. Overall, it appears that exposure to the appearance ideals depicted in Western media may cause state body dissatisfaction in some cases, but that this relationship is complicated by other variables such as genetics and family and peer norms. The purpose of the current study is to extend this body of literature by examining state body dissatisfaction as an outcome of exposure to advertisements that sexually objectify women. This study also aims to elucidate the roles of internalization of cultural appearance ideals and gender within this relationship.

Sexual Objectification

Sexual objectification is an interpersonal phenomenon that occurs when a person is seen or treated as a body or collection of body parts for use or consumption by others (Bartky, 1990). It occurs frequently and chronically in Western cultures and is expressed in varied forms, including sexualized “gaze” and body evaluation, appearance-based commentary, and sexual violence (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Sexual objectification is rooted in cultural appearance ideals as the standard to compare women and evaluate their worth. Because sexually objectifying portrayals in the media are intertwined with culturally defined appearance ideals, the current study utilizes media that include sexually objectifying images of women who portray cultural appearance ideals as the experimental stimuli.

When a person evaluates her or his body from an observer’s perspective, it is known as self-objectification (Fredrickson & Roberts,

1997). Women and girls tend to engage in self-objectification in response to situations that prompt it, such as trying on a swimsuit (Fredrickson, Roberts, Noll, Quinn, & Twenge, 1998), or to sexualized portrayals of other women (Daniels, 2009). This exposure to the sexual objectification of women and self-objectification is related to several negative psychological variables among women and girls, including appearance anxiety, body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, body shame, eating disorders, depression, and sexual dysfunction (Calogero, Tantleff-Dunn, & Thompson, 2011; Gurung & Chrouser, 2007; Tiggemann & Williams, 2012). Researchers have also demonstrated similar effects among men (Hebl, King, & Lin, 2004). Furthermore, Tylka (2015) found that men exposed to media that sexually objectify women tend to exhibit body image disturbance in the forms of body dissatisfaction and body monitoring.

Existing in a culture that chronically sexually objectifies women is suggested to influence the way both genders, but especially men, perceive women (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Indeed, Cikara, Eberhardt, and Fiske (2011) found that men, but not women, who were higher in hostile sexism were more likely to objectify women. Similarly, Swami and Tovee (2013) found that men who preferred larger breasts were more likely to objectify women. Women who viewed images of other women portrayed in provocative attire tended to objectify them (Gurung & Chrouser, 2007). Girls tended to rate women portrayed in a sexualized (as opposed to nonsexualized) manner as less physically attractive, less socially attractive, and less competent (Daniels & Zurbriggen, 2014). Boys tended to objectify women portrayed in a sexualized manner (compared to an athletic manner) and found them more attractive (Daniels & Wartena, 2011). Both women and men who were prompted to objectify a woman or focus on a woman’s appearance tended to depersonalize and sexually objectify her and rate her as less competent (Heflick & Goldenberg, 2009; Loughnan et al., 2010). Indeed, exposure to images of sexually objectified women is related to ratings of those women’s attractiveness and competence. The current study aims to extend these findings, to test if these modified attitudes about attractiveness and intelligence transfer from the woman being sexually objectified to non-objectified women.

Internalization of Cultural Appearance Ideals

Internalization of cultural appearance ideals is a probable causal factor linking media exposure to body image disturbance (Heinberg & Thompson, 1995; Thompson & Stice, 2001). Internalization refers to a person taking external cues about standards of physical beauty and making them her or his own internal views (Thompson, Coovet, et al., 1999; Thompson & Stice, 2001). When one views unrealistic standards and internalizes them, her or his own appearance standards can become impossible to obtain. Internalization of cultural appearance ideals is related to body dissatisfaction in both Western (Keery, van den Berg, & Thompson, 2004) and Eastern cultures (Yamamiya, Shroff, & Thompson, 2008). Internalization has been studied within objectification theory (Moradi, Dirks, & Matteson, 2005) and appears to play a vital role in the relationships among Western culture, the sexual objectification of women, and body dissatisfaction. Furthermore, Moradi and Huang (2008) reviewed the relevant literature and concluded that internalization should be included within examinations of objectification theory.

Internalization of cultural appearance ideals is frequently conceptualized and measured as a trait variable, defined as one’s tendency to internalize appearance ideals (Thompson, van den Berg, Roehrig, Guarda, & Heinberg, 2004), although it can also be conceptualized as a state variable, defined as an instance of internalizing appearance ideals as a result of exposure to a stimulus (e.g., Stice, Marti, Rohdo, & Shaw, 2011). Researchers have examined internalization as both a state-oriented mediator in prospective and SEM studies and as a trait-oriented moderator in experimental

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/902728>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/902728>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)