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Objecting Objectification: Finding The Links Between Self-Objectification, Views On Harassment, And Agreement With Traditional Sex Roles

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OBJECTING OBJECTIFICATION: FINDING THE LINKS BETWEEN SELF-OBJECTIFICATION, VIEWS ON HARASSMENT, AND AGREEMENT WITH TRADITIONAL SEX ROLES

A Capstone Experience/Thesis Project

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree Bachelor of Arts with

Honors College Graduate Distinction at Western Kentucky University

By

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2012

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationships between self-objectification levels, opinions on the impact of non-violent stranger sexual harassment on a personal and societal level, and agreement with traditional gender roles in college women. College women at Western Kentucky University were surveyed using the Objectified Body Consciousness Scale, the Social Roles Questionnaire, and original scales to measure views of street harassment. The hypotheses that viewing stranger harassment as both individually direct and complimentary would be positively correlated with self-objectification, and viewing it as innocuous in society were supported with correlation coefficients of $r(103) = .211$, $p = .05$, and $r(103) = .314$, $p = .01$ respectively. Hypotheses that agreement with traditional sex roles would be related to higher self-objectification levels and to views of harassment as benign to society were not. Possible reasons for these findings are explored, including the need for healthier mediums of empowerment and changing definitions of sex equality.

Keywords: street harassment, stranger harassment, self-objectification, sex roles, objectification theory, subtle sexism

Dedicated to the females who have hope for a tomorrow

without the sexist injustices of today.

You inspire me.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Girls and women today are told rather explicitly of sexism and gender inequality that still exist. Unequal salaries and opportunities for promotion to executive ranks are among the forefront of today's sex-bias conversations. Various mediums and forums frequently make remarks on the beauty culture and criticize expectations of women to adhere to impossible standards of sexual attractiveness. However, it took personal experience abroad, and the chance to juxtapose American and foreign cultures, for me to really become conscious of the discrepancies in treatment and views of women and men worldwide. While each culture has unique internal issues that should be addressed, I realized that one of America's weaknesses is it's every day subtle sexism, specifically this in the context of men's public treatment towards women whom they do not know. While on a trip in Japan I realized I was never gazed at uncomfortably long (despite my being foreign and "interesting"), heard remarks or come-ons that seemed sexually suggestive, or made otherwise uncomfortable by my being a female. It wasn't until I experienced the lack of these unpleasant occurrences and associated feelings that I realized how often I, and others, encounter them in the United States. Having been liberated of the restraints of my familiar society, I became keenly aware of how unceasingly women's subordination and objectification occur. When I returned to the

United States, experiencing once again this open practice of men sexualizing women on the streets disgusted me.

I began to ask myself what accounted for my new point of view. Rhetorically I wondered if others felt as if their ownership of their body had been violated when they received this type of unwarranted attention. I knew from experience that some women enjoy receiving this type of attention and believed it to be a consequence of their pleasing appearance. Some even seek out such attention on busy roads, dressing up and strolling city blocks to count the number of times they receive honks or whistles—this can even turn into a competitive type of game as it did for my peers in grade school. The range of reaction and aversion to this type of sexual attention is great. So what accounts for the differences between viewing public sexual attention from strangers as derogatory or as a means of flattery?

Eventually, these rhetorical questions transformed into a search for more concrete information on traits within women that could predict and account for the differences of their acceptance of what I considered to be an act of harassment.

Objectification and sexualization of women

Before specific traits and beliefs are examined, it is important to understand the social macrocosms that allow for the gratuitous public sexual attention given to women. It is a reflection of our patriarchal society when men feel they have the entitlement to make sexual comments and assessments toward women they do not know. These overt actions portray the male-centered culture we live in and are a form of objectification of women. It is an act of objectification by definition, because men are unconsciously or

consciously seeing them less as a person, and more of an object for their use, sexual or otherwise.

Sexualization, or sexual objectification, is defined in the Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls (2007) as being present when:

- a person's value comes only from his or her sexual appeal or behavior, to the exclusion of other characteristics;
- a person is held to a standard that equates physical attractiveness (narrowly defined) with being sexy;
- a person is sexually objectified—that is, made into a thing for others' sexual use, rather than seen as a person with the capacity for independent action and decision making; and/or
- sexuality is inappropriately imposed upon a person. (para. 4)

Publicly imposing attention, opinions, or remarks on a female's body whom one does not know is very much an act of sexualization, as it is extending a qualitative value on a woman based solely on her appearance. Likewise, it is indirectly asserting that her presence in this world allows her to be rated by the perpetrator and forces a sexual character upon her. This imposed sexual attention is done every day to women in the streets of the U.S. and around the world.

The permeation of sexual harassment goes deeper than the surface actions of society. The sexualization of women extends further into cultural beliefs, so that women and men expect women to behave and be treated as sexual objects for men's pleasure (Calogero, Tantleff-Dunn, Thompson, 2010). These unceasing episodes of sexual attention and expectations lead to the sexualization of women early in life, beginning even before adolescence. This patriarchal process is disempowering and limiting to women, and confirms their subordinate place in society. Yet, because it helps to define social roles and order by maintaining the role of "sex object" as a primary role for

women, thus keeping them in a subordinate position for the use of men, it continues to be considered normal and a natural part of society (Calogero, et al., pp-54-55).

Furthermore, sexualization is so engrossed in Western culture that it fits the standards of a cultural norm and is dismissed as an issue needed to be addressed (Calogero, et al., 2010). In fact, women are encouraged to take on this objectified view of themselves and therefore define their sexualization by and feel satisfaction from being the objects of male sexual desire (Calogero, et al.). *Cosmopolitan*, consistently one of the most popular magazines based on levels of circulation (Hearst Corporation, 2010), is a good example of a medium encouraging society to adopt this sexualization ideology with its racy headlines directed to women on sex topics—many of which focus on how to please men. With headings such as "125 Sex Moves: Thousands of Men Agree These are the Tricks That Send Them Over the Edge" (August 2009), and "Be a Sex Genius! These Brilliantly Naughtly Bed Moves Will Double His Pleasure—and Yours" (April 2008), *Cosmopolitan* is enforcing the concept that women should aim to serve as an object of men's sexual pleasure, leaving their own pleasure as a mere afterthought. Additional examples can be seen in advertisements for just about any type of product: fast food, cars, and toiletry products such as Axe body spray and Herbal Essences shampoo irrelevantly show women scantily clad or in a sexual light to help sell their products.

This article does not intend to imply women should not experience sexuality, as there is a difference between "self-motivated sexual exploration" (APA, 2007, para. 5) and sexualization as the APA defines it. In decrying sexualization, this does not intend to undue the victories of the sexual revolution, in which women gained access to birth control, and consequently more control

and liberty over their sexual being and desires. The difference between sexuality and sexualzation is the reciprocity involved in sexuality. It involves mutual respect, communication, and working towards each other's pleasure, as opposed to the usage of one partner for another's sexual desires (Calogero et al., 2010). Sexuality can be and is a healthy component of one's life; sexualization is not.

Self-Objectification

How does the sexualization of women relate to finding specific traits in women predictive of their views of sexual attention as objectifying or complementary? If women begin to buy into the idea of objectification, then maybe they will be more complacent to sexual attention. This process of coming to objectify oneself is called self-objectification. It happens as the principles of objectification infiltrate their way to women's beliefs, so that they too come to see themselves as sexual objects, typically after being sexually objectified many times over. Thus, the trait of self-objectification is considered the key "psychological consequence of regular exposure to sexually objectifying experiences" (Calogero, et al., 2010, p. 8). Sexual objectification, or viewing one's self as a body for the use of others, leads to internalization of this socialization until these values are incorporated into an individual's attitudes and sense of self (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

Furthermore, avoiding the socialization of sexualization is nearly impossible due to its incessant presence in society (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). One of the pioneering and guiding articles on self-objectification, "Objectification Theory" by Fredrickson and Roberts (1997), outlines three primary places where sexualization, and thus self-

objectification stem: interpersonal relations, visual media, and visual media that spotlights bodies (ie: pornography, music videos, sexual advertisements, etc.). Research into each of these areas depicts at least four continuing trends: women are more frequently the objects of men's gazes as opposed to the reverse; women experience the feeling of being looked at more often than men; men are more likely to make verbal remarks about women's bodies; and society keeps these phenomena as status quo (Fredrickson & Roberts).

Self-objectification is particularly limiting to one's potential and worrisome due its psychological and mental health stresses. Fredrickson and Roberts' (1997) objectification theory explains four primary consequences of self-objectification: increased levels of body shame, increased anxiety, a drop in peak motivational states, and a decreased awareness of internal bodily states. Each of these factors are interrelated and develop from women's constant sexualization. Although the public may not be consciously aware of such sexualization, it is difficult to actually ignore. Consequently, women are aware that their bodies are under a state of constant scrutiny and judgement. This undoubtedly puts an undue amount of pressure on women to conform to the traditional standards of beauty, thereby increasing their anxiety. When women fail, or think they have failed, to adhere to the traditional standard of beauty, they become increasingly shameful of their bodies. These increased levels of body shame stem from the real or perceived incongruences of one's real body and society's unrealistic idealization of what one should look like.

With pressures to appear attractive, women also engage in a process of body monitoring to quickly and consciously survey and assess how they are presenting

themselves. This active form of self-consciousness disrupts cognitive processes and "flow," or the peak motivational states that allow for productivity. The disruption of these steadily productive states, whether they are mental or physical, is detrimental to productivity and impedes the sense of achievement one can experience when a difficult task has been accomplished. The interruption of flow, in addition to self-consciousness, can come from the calling of attention to a woman's body from an outside source. The extra scanning of one's body also puts an undue amount of cognitive effort on one's outside self, thereby limiting one's attention to their awareness of internal bodily states. This unconsciousness of internal states can also derive from practices such as dieting, which is done as young as adolescence or even earlier. When dieting, females often learn to ignore and suppress their hunger cues, leading to a generalized quieting of internal states, or the inability to recognize the cues their body is telling them (Fredrickson & Roberts). As such, women are less likely to recognize hunger, fatigue, or arousal (Fredrickson & Roberts).

The objectification theory further lists three other health risks—depression, eating disorders, and sexual dysfunction—that accumulate either directly from the action of sexual harassment or indirectly through the four prior stresses. There are a number of explanations for why an individual with higher objectification levels is more likely to be depressed. As stated earlier, self-objectification permeates one's sense of self. After puberty, when one's body typically begins to become objectified, women may come to view themselves as others do, replacing their original self-concepts and experience a "loss of self" (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) that contributes to depression. Additionally,

a perceived lack of control of having one's body observed and objectified as well as the resulting body shame are possible contributors to depression.

Unsurprisingly eating disorders are related to higher levels of self-objectification as one aims to meet the cultural standards of beauty. Eating disorders could also stem from a woman's seeking to regain power, either through limiting food intake to feel in control of something, or over-eating as a way to object to society's beauty standards (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

When addressing sexual dysfunction, the objectification theory builds upon traditional thought of women's decreased sexual performance. The theory not only considers women's role as the givers or pleasers for men's satisfaction and that they tend not to focus on their own sexual desires and pleasure, but takes into account other psychological phenomena that is occurring simultaneously. Habits of self-objectification such as shame, anxiety, and body monitoring can hinder a woman's sexual satisfaction, as it distracts her from the sexual activity. Additionally, decreased awareness of internal bodily arousal can further hinder a woman's sexual satisfaction (Fredrickson & Roberts).

Stranger Harassment

This article focuses on how the trait of self-objectification relates to views on harassment, specifically, nonviolent stranger harassment. Sexual harassment is often categorized into three groups: sexual coercion, gender harassment, and unwanted sexual attention (Fairchild & Rudman, 2008). Because this study wishes to examine subtle yet prominent forms of sexism, it will focus exclusively on gender harassment and unwanted sexual attention, with a focus on the latter when discussing forms of sexual harassment.

Therefore, violent and more coercive forms of harassment should not be deduced from usage of the term harassment in this study.

Stranger harassment, a form of sexual harassment from a perpetrator who is unfamiliar to the target, is less frequently studied than types of harassment from a source with whom the target is familiar, such as a manager, colleague, classmate, etc. (Fairchild & Rudman, 2008). Non-violent, public stranger harassment, commonly referred to as street harassment because of the typicality of its context, is an even lesser studied form of stranger harassment. Common examples of street harassment include cat-calls, whistles, lingering stares, and pick up lines. Lack of ability to administer legal repercussions combined with the faulty belief that such forms of harassment are less consequential to the victim contribute to lack of attention in this area from researchers (Fairchild & Rudman).

However, lack of research attention does not equate to a lack of exigency or eminence. Macmillan, Nierobisz, and Welsh (2000) found that stranger harassment is not only more prevalent than harassment from acquaintances, but indeed does create significant and sometimes more consequential negative results for its victims. In the study, Macmillan, et al. discovered that stranger harassment makes women more fearful of victimization. Perhaps one reason for this is the decreased sense of power felt during an incident with a stranger. Women who experience sexual attention and harassment learn to be perceptive to the danger of sexual violence and to be more fearful (Macmillan, et al.). Such fear may be a potential influence in that women are more likely to restrain their movements within their environments (Fairchild & Rudman, 2008). Women

frequently have to alter their routes or avoid certain places or areas altogether, especially at night, out of fear of sexual victimization.

Given the consequences of sexual harassment, the frequency is immense, though maybe not surprising. Studies that have looked at the prevalence of stranger sexual harassment have found that the most common forms of any harassment are "catcalls, whistles or stares," with about 30 percent of women experiencing it every couple of days, and between 80 percent (median participant age of 29) and 95 percent (median participant age of 19) of women experiencing it at least monthly (Fairchild & Rudman, 2008; Fairchild, 2010). Other forms of non-violent stranger sexual harassment including "unwanted sexual attention, crude or offensive sexual jokes, and sexist remarks or come-ons" were experienced by well over half of the population in a month's time for both age demographics. The difference in received or perceived directed sexual attention between age demographics elicits more questions on what triggers such attention and reasons for possible differences in responses between age groups. However, this study will not examine such differences due to the lack of age variation of the college women in the sample population.

It is important to note that there are times when such harassment wouldn't be considered harassment by the receiver of such attention. There are a number of relevant factors that can contribute to this including age, attractiveness, and marital status of the perpetrator, as well as whether the woman receiving attention is alone or with someone else (Fairchild, 2010). Thus, when a woman is by herself and receives sexual attention from a much older, unattractive male, whom she knows as married, she would perceive it much differently than if she was with friends and the male was closer to her age and ideal

of attractiveness and single. While the social structures that allow for this may seem axiomatic, the halo effect given to attractive males may make it difficult for women to see the possible dangers and consequences of such come-ons (Fairchild).

Can self-objectification, as well as perpetrator attributes, be a factor in whether women deem sexual attention as harassment or flattery? Fairchild and Rudman sought to find links between experiencing stranger harassment and exhibiting self-objectification in their 2008 study. They found stranger harassment is correlated to levels of self-objectification—but only when coping styles were considered. Participants were much more likely to self objectify when they passively coped by pretending the exchange didn't happen or self-blaming as opposed to using an active coping strategy such as confronting the harasser, talking about the situation with friends, and/or reporting the incident. While Fairchild and Rudman's study does address victims' actions or lack thereof in relation to self-objectification, it doesn't address whether women who do nothing, yet blame the perpetrator instead of themselves, are still less likely to self objectify. This specification is particularly important when addressing stranger street harassment, the type of harassment this study investigates. Because stranger harassment happens so quickly, and the offender is unknown, it can be difficult to address the perpetrator.

Views on Harassment

The way women respond to sexual street harassment impacts the outcome of self-objectification; if women actively address the situation or perpetrator or talk about it with friends, they are less likely to self-objectify (Fairchild & Rudman, 2008). This information does not address, though, whether it is the active response to harassment that

makes women less prone to self-objectification or if those women who do actively cope recognize street harassment as being negative to women and would be less likely to self-objectify no matter how they responded to its occurrences. This article will look at women's views of harassment in correlation to levels of self-objectification. If it can be shown that they are correlated, perhaps future studies can show a cause and effect relationship. Such a relationship would suggest that by just changing the way women view harassment could lead to changes in their self-objectification levels. When women don't self-objectify, they are more likely to see themselves as a subject of self-efficacy instead of an object, namely for another's sexual pleasure. With this new subjectification, women can garner a new self-respect, and not be hindered by trying to adhere to others' ideals. When women are able to escape the restraints of self-objectification, they can achieve the empowerment to live their fullest lives.

Implications of sex-role agreement

For most women, messages of sexualization in our society are at least or more inescapable as experiencing instances of stranger harassment. Some women are able to actively cope in a way that helps them to escape self-objectification and its consequences (Fairchild & Rudman, 2008), but as seen by the direct and indirect effects in Fredrickson and Roberts' objectification theory (e.g., self-monitoring, eating disorders, depression, etc.) and the prevalence of these in society, others are not. This study also seeks to see if women's agreement with traditional sex roles can help to explain who is more likely to view harassment as negative and who is more at risk of self-objectifying. By understanding who, if anyone, is more susceptible to internalizing sexualization and the risks of self-objectification, empowerment campaigns could be better directed, sending

messages of internal strength and resilience to young women. Additionally, by separating and educating those who do not understand the harmful effects of stranger street harassment, we could aid in their empowerment, and eventually eradicate these instances of sexualization, or at least the internalization of its harmful messages.

Significance

Levels of self-objectification, views on harassment, and sex-role agreement in college women are examined in this study. This age group was selected because these women typically are at the age where they experience sexual objectification the most. They are past the age of puberty and are seen as in their sexual prime by societal standards of youth, beauty, and sexuality. Because of the frequency of their encounters with street harassment, they may also have more pronounced feelings on the subject. In addition, this group allows for the collection of a large amount of data relatively quickly and cost efficiently.

By looking at participant data, this study seeks to increase what is known about self-objectification, as relatively little research has been done on the topic. Beyond the Fairchild and Rudman 2008 study, research looking at the relationships between street harassment and sexual objectification is scarce. Although previous research examines how coping methods can influence self-objectification, this study extends to general opinions of street harassment as a correlate of self-objectification. This is innovative, as not all responses and coping methods are possible for street harassment due to the unfamiliarity of and possibility for quick escape by the assailant.

In addition, Fairchild and Rudman's 2008 study is limited in that it only applies to women who experience stranger harassment. Some women are simply less likely to

experience sexual attention and harassment; according to statistics there are still about 20% of women who report experiencing stranger sexual harassment on a less than monthly basis. If views on harassment can predict self-objectification levels, then perhaps knowledge acquired on self-objectification and how women perceive harassment can be applied to all females, not just those who deal with harassment on a regular basis. To find out, a relationship must first be shown to exist between views of harassment and sexual objectification.

Finally, the implications of sex-role agreement have yet to be explored when considering self-objectification or stranger harassment. This could help to show if there is a sub-population who is more at risk for self objectification and its consequences, and help to direct future programs to reduce self-objectification in women.

CHAPTER 2

HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis 1: There will be a positive correlation between those who view stranger harassment as a personal compliment and those who have high levels of self-objectification.

Some women benefit from the practice of self-objectification; when asked to answer questions gauging self-objectification and well being, women who assess their self worth based on their outer appearance and have a high self-esteem reported a larger increase in well-being when put in situations where they self-objectify as compared to other women (Calogero, et al., 2010). Because of this, it is logical to infer that these women would seek public sexual attention and consider it a personal compliment when they receive it, as opposed to thinking the harasser would have made the comment/action to any woman in her position.

Likewise, Fairchild and Rudman (2008) found that those who cope with harassment by interpreting such attention as complimentary self objectify more often. This study isn't looking at coping strategies, but the overall belief that such attention is personal and should be perceived positively. Therefore, no harassment actually needs to be aimed at a participant. This helps to eliminate any confounding variables that may come from some women simply reflecting on sexual attention positively—a possible reaction to reduce cognitive disconcertment.

Hypothesis 2: There will be a positive correlation between agreement that stranger harassment is a benign part of society and that such occurrences are directed compliments rather than arbitrary remarks.

The belief is that those who view stranger harassment as a compliment will be among those who get improved self esteem from such attention and, therefore, will be accepting of its occurrence in society. These participants will believe that such actions are a cultural norm and do not need be addressed, as they are "harmless" to society.

Hypothesis 3: There will be a positive correlation in women's levels of self-objectification and levels of traditional gender role agreement.

This article examines if women who do not agree with traditional sex roles are less likely to self-objectify. It could be that women who do not agree with such roles are more likely to actively cope with stranger harassment than those who agree with traditional sex roles, and therefore self-objectify less. Thus, women who do have higher levels of agreement with traditional sex roles may be more likely to self-objectify and see themselves as an object for men's use.

Hypothesis 4: There will be a positive correlation between those who view stranger harassment as benign to society and those who have high agreement with gender roles.

It is also logical to believe that those who agree with traditional sex roles are more likely to believe that stranger harassment is an innocuous societal happening as they might be less likely to question the cultural norms of unequal gender status it presents.

This is based on the belief that agreement with traditional sex roles equates to acceptance of all sex roles—including that of sexual object.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Participants

Participants were gathered through the Western Kentucky University psychology department research laboratory website. The study was open to college women with access to a computer. After deleting cases that had missing responses to ensure accurate correlations, there were 103 sets of data. Participants aged 18-21 accounted for 87.4% of the data, with a mode of 19 years of age; 92.2% of participants identified as Caucasian, 6.8% as African American, and 1% as Hispanic; 93.% identified as being heterosexual, 3.9% as bisexual, 1% as homosexual, and 1.9% as "other." A table of participant demographics can be found in Appendix A. In some cases, participants entered the study for course credit.

Survey

Items were composed of the Body Surveillance and the Body Shame subscales of McKinley and Hyde's Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (OBCS) (1996), The Social Roles Questionnaire developed by Baber and Tucker (2006), and questions created to gauge subjects' opinions on societal and personal impact of street harassment.

The Body Surveillance and Body Shame subscales were used to measure levels of self-objectification in respondents for multiple reasons. Their accuracy in measuring the desired concepts is accepted by scholars and they have a good test-retest reliability

(Calogero, et al., 2010). Although the two scales are strongly correlated and can be summed to get a total score (McKinley & Hyde, 1996), it is recommended the measures are used separately to get a more thorough understanding of the data and to avoid potential problems in interpretation (Calogero, et al.). The Surveillance scale is most telling of a woman's self-objectifying tendencies as it measures body monitoring, a habit of women who frequently observe themselves from an external point of view (Calogero, et al.). We used the Body Shame subscale as an indicator of the consequences of self-objectification, and though it was used in the survey, it is not referenced or used as a correlate in this article. Rather than measure levels of self-objectification, it serves as a reference of measuring its consequences—not what this study sought to explore. Post hoc tests also showed nonsignificant relationships between the body shame subscale and other scales.

The Self Objectification Questionnaire by Fredrickson and Noll (1998) was considered as another scale to measure self-objectification, but the rank format would have been difficult to implement into my questionnaire, which had randomized items. Additionally the rank format increases possibility of measurement error (Calogero, et al., 2010) and provides ordinal level data when we need interval level data for our analyses.

The Social Roles Questionnaire was used to measure agreement with traditional sex roles because of its ability to capture subtle sexism (Baber & Tucker, 2006). Other scales used to measure role categorization by sex tend to be outdated and limit participants' responses to a dichotomous perspective on social roles (Baber & Tucker). Baber and Tucker also presented reliability and validity evidence in support of the Social Roles Questionnaire.

Finally, scales were developed to measure opinions of non-violent stranger sexual harassment, defined in the questionnaire as "the actions of honking, whistling, and cat-calls towards women only from men they have not met." Five statements were created to measure participants' perceived directedness of attention (*depicts items that were reverse scaled when performing statistical tests):

1. Males are more likely to give attention to females they do not know if they find them attractive. *
2. When I receive attention from men I do not know it is because they like the way I look. *
3. When males give attention to females they do not know, it has nothing to do with the female's appearance as much as her just being a woman.
4. When I receive attention from men I do not know I feel a sense of pride and accomplishment.*
5. When I receive attention from men I do not know I take it as a compliment.*

Additionally, five more questions were developed to measure participants' attitudes toward such attention's impact on society:

1. Attention received from and given to unacquainted people is harmless to all those involved.*
2. Attention received from strangers is beneficial to a woman's self worth.*
3. Attention received from strangers is objectifying to females as it relates to their association as sex objects.
4. Attention given to and received from strangers is a part of our culture and does not need to be addressed.*
5. Attention given to and received from strangers is a problem on our campus.

A complete list of survey items can be found in Appendix B.

Procedure

Participants needed an account with Western Kentucky University's Studyboard website. This automated online system is run by the Department of Psychology and allows researchers, instructors, and students to schedule research participation. Students

who have access to the site are able to look through research studies in which they wish to participate. Students were told that this study gauged female students' opinions. If they agreed to participate, they were given the link to the survey, which they could take then or at a later, more convenient time. When they entered the study's website, they read and agreed to the informed consent document, and clicked to verify that they were at least 18 years of age. They then answered three demographical questions regarding age, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. They were then given the 40 questions composed of the scales above, given collectively in a random order. In addition, there were two more questions at the end: a true/false item to see if there had been times the participant had felt uncomfortable receiving sexual attention from strangers, and a follow up question asking why if they responded "true." The survey could be completed in approximately 20 minutes.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Hypothesis 1: As predicted, there was a significant, though weak, positive correlation between self-objectification as measured by the Surveillance subscale and perceiving attention as a compliment, $r(103) = .211$, $p = .05$.

Hypothesis 2: There was also a significant positive correlation between viewing stranger harassment as a compliment and believing it to be innocuous in society, $r(103) = .314$, $p = .01$.

Hypotheses 3 & 4: There were not significant correlations between agreement with traditional sex roles and levels of self-objectification, $r(103) = -.011$, $p > .05$ or between agreement with traditional sex roles and views of harassment in society, $r(103) = -.084$, $p > .05$.

Additionally, there was also a significant negative correlation between finding street harassment to be random and non-directed and reporting experiences of feeling uncomfortable by such harassment, $r(103) = -.275$, $p = .01$. In other words, if participants reported believing sexual attention as directed and complimentary according to the perception of directedness scale, they were more likely to report feeling uncomfortable by such attention. However, the correlation is likely attributed to believing attention is

specifically directed more than perceiving the attention as complimentary, as feeling the attention was purposefully aimed at the participant may have made them feel more vulnerable in the sight of the perpetrator. There are a number of reasons that some of the participants felt uncomfortable receiving sexual attention from strangers; the most listed reasons were that they felt the attention was inappropriate or it made them feel endangered, with 54.4% and 24.3% respectively. These and other correlation statistics can be found in Appendix C.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The results confirmed that viewing stranger harassment as complimentary is related to levels of self-objectification and to thinking that stranger harassment is a benign component of society. The correlations are weak though, suggesting that while the two concepts are related to viewing harassment as flattery, there may be other factors to consider. Significant correlations between viewing stranger harassment as flattery and self-objectifying does not confirm whether viewing attention as flattery is simply a coping strategy that protects against negative emotions such as feeling endangered or objectified (as Fairchild and Rudman found in 2008), or if viewing it as complimentary is a more temporally-general belief adopted by people who self objectify. If it is the latter, viewing sexual attention as flattery would not be a response to such attention; to the contrary, it could happen even before the receipt of attention, perhaps as an effect of self-objectification. Women who do self objectify are more likely to think that sexual attention is directed toward them and is a reflection of the perpetrator's positive perception of their appearance. For women who equate self worth to their outer appearance, having such views would be particularly beneficial to their self-esteem when they do receive such attention.

As expected, viewing sexual attention as a compliment and directed is related to thinking that it is a positive or innocuous experience for women. This is reasonable

because receiving compliments are usually viewed as a positive experience and this study shows women who view sexual attention as flattering are more likely to think that it is positive for other women to experience, possibly by helping their esteem and confidence. However, this suggests that there may be a need for education of women about healthier channels from which to feel empowered and confident—ones that would not increase levels of objectification by men or themselves.

What is perhaps even more interesting, however, is the lack of relationship between agreement with traditional sex roles and levels of self-objectification and seeing sexual attention toward women as negative. This could suggest that no matter how progressive a woman's thoughts are on traditional issues of women's equality, they are not immune to this subtle form of sexism or experiencing self-objectification. It appears anyone is susceptible to the negative effects of stranger harassment and equally likely to view this patriarchal activity as a non-issue.

Longitudinal data shows that when women do not internalize traditional feminine roles, they are more likely to experience poorer psychological health during childbearing years (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). This is an example of how the pressures of adhering to societal expectations and roles can be taxing, even on women who do not aim to live up to them. Likewise, Calogero et al. (2010) contend that women are able to resist some societal pressure to comply with social norms when they are conscious and critical of the sexist ideals that women are supposed to live up to, such as wearing makeup or high heels; however, they should not be expected to completely rebel from such customs as the "rewards for compliance are substantial and salient," (p. 67).

Alternatively, the non-relationship between agreement with traditional sex roles and negative views of harassment could be a reflection of today's young adult women and on the evolutional definition of traditional sex roles. This particular generation has grown up hearing about women's equality, and thus may be more likely to report agreement with more equal roles for the sexes. However, sex equality may end there for them. Although women may be more likely to agree that women shouldn't be treated differently in regards to obtaining equal jobs and education or have separate responsibilities when it comes to rearing children or doing house work, they may be less likely to consider different roles in society pertaining to women's sexuality. This generation may be more apt to call segregation or unequal opportunity based upon sex as sexism; however, they may be less noticing or critical of discrepancies between the sexes when it comes to social roles.

Future directions

There are campaigns which have recognized and addressed the social implications of street harassment. These campaigns, such as Hollaback and stopstreetharassment.org empower women by allowing them to share their stories and denounce street harassment. The goal in doing so is to give ownership of women's bodies back to them, raise awareness of the problem of street harassment, and influence policy. Future research should look to see whether exposure to these messages can influence views on street harassment. If understanding campaigns against street harassment can make women

condemn its occurrence, it should also be seen if this could consequently reduce women's self-objectification as well.

Other research should look to examine how empowerment can counteract the consequences of street harassment and self-objectification. Knowing the relationship, if one exists, between having a higher perception of self-efficacy and reduced liklihood of self-objectifying or condoning street harassment could better direct future programs toward more susceptible populations.

Likewise, age of the woman could play a part in how she perceives stranger harassment. Looking to see how views of street harassment and self-objectification levels do or do not change as she gets older would give insight to trends throughout the lifespan. It may be that self-objectification is a trait that remains stable throughout the lifetime. Conversely, self-objectification could increase as women get older and are more eager to receive messages that approve their sexual appearance, since such messages aren't as readily given to older women. If this is the case, it may be that women are placing more importance on their outer appearance in assessing their self worth at any age, and are more likely to see street harassment as flattery in order to maintain self-esteem. To the contrary, self-objectification and acceptance of street harassment could decline as women age. It may be that the decreasing sexualization of older women leads them to seek self-esteem through factors other than physical appearance. Thus, sexual attention would not influence women's esteem, and they would be more likely to view harassment negatively.

Looking at harassment and self-objectification levels on a cross-cultural level could also give cues about their relationship. Looking at countries where street harassment is not as prevalent or more prevalent and comparing it to self-objectification

levels of its women would give more insight into the societal implications of excusing harassment or viewing it as benign.

There is still much to be learned about self-objectification and the consequences of stranger harassment. However, this study supports the findings of Fairchild and Rudman (2008) depicting a relationship between viewing stranger harassment as complimentary and higher levels of self-objectification. This study extends this finding beyond viewing harassment as positive as a coping strategy to a more temporally-indistinct view of street harassment as a positive occurrence. This study also shows that viewing stranger harassment as personally flattering is related to thinking of stranger harassment as benign on a societal level. Perhaps informing women about the consequences of street harassment could sway their opinions to thinking of it as a negative component of society. Encouraging women everywhere to learn about and engage in programs such as Hollaback could give them a heightened sense of ownership of their bodies, and reduce self-objectification through a more active response as found by Fairchild and Rudman (2008). Unexpectedly, those who seem more progressive about women's equal status in society may not be more likely to condemn stranger harassment and self-objectify less. Perhaps this suggests that more extensive messages about women's issues and subtle forms of sexism and subordination should be explored in classes and media. Lastly, the role of age, empowerment, and culture should be explored to see how these influence self-objectification.

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Appendix A

Participant Demographics

Table A1

Age	Frequency	Percent
18	23	22.3
19	43	41.7
20	15	14.6
21	9	8.7
22-25	8	7.8
>25	5	4.8

Table A2

Ethnicity	Frequency	Percent
Caucasian	95	92.2
African American	7	6.8
Hispanic	1	1

Table A3

Sexuality	Frequency	Percent
Heterosexual	96	93.2
Homosexual	1	1.0
Bisexual	4	3.9
Other	2	1.9

Appendix B

Survey

The questions are composed of the objectified body consciousness scale, the social roles questionnaire, and measurements I created to assess opinions toward street harassment. All questions were randomized for each participant and used a 5-point Likert format ranging from 1(*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) with a "N/A" option, The last question was an exception as it used a true / false format, with an optional follow up question. These items were always the final items.

1. Demographics
Age
Ethnicity
Sexual Orientation

2. Questions
Directions: Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree to the following statements. "Attention," as talked about in this questionnaire, refers to the actions of honking, whistling, and cat-calls towards women only from men they have not met.

a. I rarely think about how I look.
b. I think it is more important that my clothes are comfortable than whether they look good on me.
c. I think more about how my body feels than how my body looks.
d. I rarely compare how I look with how other people look.
e. During the day, I think about how I look many times.
f. I often worry about whether the clothes I am wearing make me look good.
g. I rarely worry about how I look to other people.
h. I am more concerned with what my body can do than how it looks.
i. When I can't control my weight, I feel like something must be wrong with me.
j. I feel ashamed of myself when I haven't made the effort to look my best.
k. I feel like I must be a bad person when I don't look as good as I could.
l. I would be ashamed for people to know what I really weigh.
m. I never worry that something is wrong with me when I am not exercising as much as I should.
n. When I'm not exercising enough, I question whether I am a good enough person.
o. Even when I can't control my weight, I think I'm an okay person.
p. When I'm not the size I think I should be, I feel ashamed.
q. People can be both aggressive and nurturing regardless of sex.
r. People should be treated the same regardless of their sex.
s. The freedom that children are given should be determined by their age and maturity level and not by their sex.
t. Tasks around the house should not be assigned by sex.
u. We should stop thinking about whether people are male or female and focus on other characteristics.

v. A father's major responsibility is to provide financially for his children.
w. Men are more sexual than women.
x. Some types of work are just not appropriate for women.
y. Mothers should make most decisions about how children are brought up.
z. Mothers should work only if necessary.
aa. Girls should be protected and watched over more than boys.
bb. Only some types of work are appropriate for both men and women.
cc. For many important jobs, it is better to choose men instead of women.
dd. Males are more likely to give attention to females they do not know if they find them attractive.
ee. When I receive attention from men I do not know it is because they like the way I look.
ff. When males give attention to females they do not know, it is more likely because she is a woman than that they find her attractive.
gg. When I receive attention from men I do not know, I feel a sense of pride and accomplishment.
hh. When I receive attention from men I do not know, I take it as a compliment.
ii. Attention received from and given to unacquainted people is harmless to all those involved.
jj. Attention received from strangers is beneficial to a woman's self worth.
kk. Attention received from strangers is objectifying to females as it relates to their association as sex objects.
ll. Attention given to and received from strangers is a part of our culture and does not need to be addressed.
mm. Attention given to and received from strangers happens a lot on our campus.
nn. Attention given to and received from strangers is a problem on our campus.

oo. There have been times when I felt uncomfortable receiving attention from men I did not know.
(True/false)

pp. If your answer to the question above was "true" please explain why.

- ☐ It made me feel uncomfortable.
- ☐ I felt endangered.
- ☐ I did not feel I deserved it at the time.
- ☐ I felt it was inappropriate.
- ☐ I find it embarrassing.
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Appendix C

Correlations

Table C1

		surveillance	body shame	social roles	Directedness of attention	Societal impact
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.860	.393	.950	.007	.000
	N	103	103	103	103	103
surveillance	Pearson Correlation	1	.629**	-.011	-.211*	.042
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.910	.033	.672
	N	103	103	103	103	103
body shame	Pearson Correlation	.629**	1	-.057	-.127	.138
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.568	.203	.165
	N	103	103	103	103	103
Social roles	Pearson Correlation	-.011	-.057	1	.021	-.084
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.910	.568		.831	.401
	N	103	103	103	103	103
Directedness of attention	Pearson Correlation	-.211*	-.127	.021	1	.314**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.033	.203	.831		.001
	N	103	103	103	103	103
Societal impact	Pearson Correlation	.042	.138	-.084	.314**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.672	.165	.401	.001	
	N	103	103	103	103	103

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Appendix D

Human Subjects Review Board approval document

WKU

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HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW BOARD

In future correspondence, please refer to HS11-161, March 2, 2011

Amy Bishop
Dr. Reagan Brown
c/o Dr. Kristi Branham
Psychology/ Women's Studies
WKU

All:

Your research project, *Objecting Objectification: Finding the Links between Women's Self-objectification, Views on Harassment, and Sex-role Agreement*, was reviewed by the IRB and it has been determined that risks to subjects are: (1) minimized and reasonable; and that (2) research procedures are consistent with a sound research design and do not expose the subjects to unnecessary risk. Reviewers determined that: (1) benefits to subjects are considered along with the importance of the topic and that outcomes are reasonable; (2) selection of subjects is equitable; and (3) the purposes of the research and the research setting is amenable to subjects' welfare and producing desired outcomes; that indications of coercion or prejudice are absent, and that participation is clearly voluntary.

1. In addition, the IRB found that you need to orient participants as follows: (1) signed informed consent is not required; (2) Provision is made for collecting, using and storing data in a manner that protects the safety and privacy of the subjects and the confidentiality of the data. (3) Appropriate safeguards are included to protect the rights and welfare of the subjects.

   This project is therefore approved at the Expedited Review Level until November 1, 2011.

2. Please note that the institution is not responsible for any actions regarding this protocol before approval. If you expand the project at a later date to use other instruments please re-apply. Copies of your request for human subjects review, your application, and this approval, are maintained in the Office of Sponsored Programs at the above address. Please report any changes to this approved protocol to this office. A Continuing Review protocol will be sent to you in the future to determine the status of the project. Also, please use the stamped approval forms to assure participants of compliance with The Office of Human Research Protections regulations.

Sincerely,

Paul J. Mooney, M.S.T.M.
Compliance Manager
Office of Research
Western Kentucky University

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD WKU APPROVED

IRB APPLICATION # 11-161
APPROVED 3/2/11 to 11/1/11
EXEMPT EXPEDITED FULLBOARD
DATE APPROVED 3/2/11

cc: HS file number Bishop HS11-161

The Spirit Makes the Master

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