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OVERCOMING SELF-OBJECTIFICATION THROUGH A MIND BODY AWARENESS PROGRAM

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A MIND-BODY AWARENESS PROGRAM

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A Project

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

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in

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by

Alexandra Winner-Bachus

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ABSTRACT

As previous communication scholars have noted, "In light of epidemic levels of self-objectification leading to a host of negative consequences for girls and women, intervention is crucial" (Kite, 2013, pg. III). The purpose of this MA project is to design and conduct a workshop to assist women in resisting self-objectification. The following literature review outlines the theoretical foundations for the project, as well as the most constructive interventions suggested by previous research. I will first review the literature on objectification and self-objectification, then examine the impacts of self-objectification on women. Next, I will discuss what the literature suggests as the most efficacious interventions to self-objectification and conclude with a detailed overview of my proposed workshop.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

SELF-OBJECTIFICATION THEORY

Self-objectification is a phenomenon that impacts women throughout the world. The study of self-objectification is rooted in Objectification theory, developed by Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) as a framework to understand how cultural messages (primarily media messages) sexually objectify the female body. Self-objectification theory posits that females are typically acculturated to internalize the objectified perspective as the way they view their own physical selves. Calogero, Tantleff-Dunn, & Thompson describe objectification as to be treated and made into an object that can be manipulated, controlled, used, and known through its physical properties (2011). Fredrikson and Roberts found that self-objectification consumed attention resources which in turns restricts the cognitive resources that would be available for other tasks.

According to Kaschak (1992) our culture is dominated by heterosexuality, and the most subtle and common way sexualization occurs is through visual inspection of the body or gaze to fit artificial heterosexual norms. Herman (p.9) follows Kaschak (p.251) in concluding that "the most notable aspect of current gender arrangement is that the masculine always defines the feminine by naming, containing, engulfing, invading, and evaluating it. The feminine is never permitted to stand alone or to subsume the masculine" (1993).

Fredrickson & Roberts' (1997) research on objectification theory showed that the female body is evaluated and scrutinized to a higher degree than male

bodies, which often fosters sexual objectification. "The common thread running through all forms of sexual objectification is the experience of being treated as a body (or collection of body parts) valued predominantly for its use to (or consumption by) others" (Fredrickson & Roberts, p. 174). Fredrickson & Roberts state that sexual objectification occurs whenever a woman's body parts, body, or sexual functions are detached from her being, reduced to mere instruments, or looked at as if they were able of representing her. According to their objectification theory, the media incite women to self-objectify by accenting the sexual objectification of women's bodies, with the media's inclination to value women mainly for their appearance (p. 175).

Evolutionary Psychology and the Impact of the Media
on Internal Psychological Processes

According to Luskin (2012), the rapid growth and influence that computers, television, social media, the internet, and movies have on the brain can be seen using Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) with results showing specific outcomes affecting the brain and behavior. Luskin's research found that some people use the internet and or broadcast media as an emotional and mental refuge and retreat. Addicts become connected to the screen with their minds trapped for hours and end up neglecting work, family, social relationships, studies, and themselves.

Addiction to the media can be traced back to evolutionary psychology and the traits that made survival possible then (Nicholson, 1998). According to

Nicholson, *Homo sapiens* appeared on the Savannah Plain some 200,000 years ago, and evolutionary psychology can help understand why human beings are hardwired and still have a drive to share information and trade secrets or fights furiously when threatened. This hardwiring according to Nicholson governs most human behavior to this day. According to psychodynamic theory and studied by Berlin (2009), unconscious processes (and hardwiring) drive desires, impulses, or motives such as seen through objectification.

These hardwired desires of the human body can be both unconscious and conscious and is orchestrated through two interdependent cognitive processing systems affecting objectification (Carter, 2017). According to Carter the first one is comprised of automatic, intuitive, and fast way of thinking and the second one is more controlled, conscious, deliberate, and a slower way of thinking. Carter explains that system one makes up most of our decisions and that objectification often occurs unconsciously.

The media plays with our unconscious processes and evolutionary psychology of objectification through using three core neural pathways which are associated with sexual behavior, the dopamine system, the limbic system, and the hypothalamus (Hall, 2013). According to Hall and studied by Pfaus (2009), the dopamine system is associated with reward and reinforces learned behavior associated with sexual arousal and sends signals to the hypothalamus and limbic areas. It also increases blood flow to areas that stimulates sexual behaviors such as the heart and genitals.

There are different ways that the media use sexual objectification which can increase sexual neural pathways. One of the ways is spotlighting bodies and body parts which aligns viewers with an implicit sexualizing gaze (Mulvey 1975).

Another way that the media's focus on female bodies has been analyzed is in terms of relative facial prominence (Archer, Iritani, Kimes & Barrios, 1983). In their study Archer et al. looked at different context such as artwork, American periodicals, and amateur drawings and found that there is a greater facial prominence in depictions of men than of women across several cultures and in artwork for the last several centuries (p. 734).

Fredrickson and Roberts found that men tend to be portrayed in visual media with an emphasis on the face and head, and women on an emphasis on the body. It is not uncommon for pictures to eliminate the woman's head focusing only on their body parts. The mass media proliferation of sexualized visuals of the female body is thorough and fast which makes confrontations virtually unavoidable in contemporary culture.

Aubrey, Henson, Hopper and Smith (2009) found that sexual objectification is saturated in contemporary society with using images and visual representation of women's bodies which might cause women to sexually self-objectivity and therefore appears as normal, yet the negative consequences are often unacknowledged or overlooked. "Sexual objectification of women's bodies teaches women to internalize an outsider's perspective on the self – such that they come to see themselves as objects to be evaluated by others" (p. 272).

Aubrey et al. (2009) theorized that the media's powerful focus on body parts and bodies provoke women to self-objectify by prioritizing concerns about how they look over how they are thinking, feeling, or acting. The researchers examined how visual objectification in the media influenced females to sexual self-objectify. They tested two aspects of sexual objectification. The first one focused on images of females with a great degree of body display, and the second one on images of females cut into different body parts. Their findings showed that high skin exposure of female models produced more self-objectification and more negativity in one's appearance than photos of females segmented into body parts (p. 280).

According to Calogero, Tantleff-Dunn, & Thompson (2011), the media play a significant part in creating the societal norms and reinforcing women to fall into self-objectifying. Research has revealed that sexually objectified images of women in the media are virtually impossible to ignore or avoid and that sexually objectifying images of women have increased over time (Calogero, Tantleff-Dunn, & Thompson, 2011).

Research indicates that most women and girls are to some extent affected by media objectification. I will now focus on research that demonstrates how such sexual objectification coaxes women to adopt an unhealthy view of the self.

CHAPTER TWO

OUTCOMES OF SELF OBJECTIFICATION

Research has shown that self-objectification leads to negative psychological or experiential consequences that occur at a much higher rate among women than among men (Fredrickson & Roberts, 2007). This includes body shame (Lewis 1992; Mercurio & Laundry, 2008), safety concerns (Calogero, Tylka, Siegel, Pina, & Roberts, 2020), body surveillance (Frederickon and Roberts; Aubrey, Henson, Hopper, Smith, 2009) appearance anxiety (Calogero et al., 2020; McKinley, 1999), decreased concentration or flow experiences on physical and mental tasks (Greenleaf, 2005), restriction of freedom of movement (Calogero, Tantleff-Dunn & Thompson, 2011; Fredrickson & Robert), disordered eating (Noll & Fredrickson, 1998; Tiggeman & Kurig 2004, Moradi, Dirks, Mateson), depression (Muehlenkamp & Saris-Baglama, 2002; Tiggemann & Slater, 2001; Szymanski & Henning, 2007), fear of rape through gender-based violence and harassment (Fairchild & Rudman, 2008; Warr, 1985), and reduced awareness of internal bodily states (e.g., fatigue, emotions, hunger). In addition, these negative outcomes are shown to accumulate and lead directly to an array of psychological disorders and health risks such as sexual dysfunctions and unipolar depression (Fredrickson & Roberts).

Body Surveillance

Fredrickson and Roberts' study found that in a culture where the female body is objectified, whatever women or girls do, there is always a chance that their thoughts and actions are to be interrupted by images of how their bodies look, creating a set of subjective experiences. In their research Aubrey, Henson, Hopper, and Smith (2009) examined the effect of the media to extend the understanding of how visual depictions of females' bodies in the media might provoke women to self-objectify by prioritizing their concern over how their bodies look over how they think, feel, or act. In their study the participants that were exposed to body display visuals used more negative words to describe their appearance than the participants that were not assigned images of females with high skin exposure. Their results extended the body of literature on self-objectification by offering evidence of the relation between self-objectification, body surveillance and indicators of psychological impact on well-being.

McKinley (1999) studied daughters' and mothers' body experience using the objectified body consciousness construct (OBC) which is based on how women are taught to look at their bodies in American culture (McKinley & Hyde, 1996). OBC consists of three components. The first is surveillance (seeing their bodies through an outside lens). Girls are taught quite early that they are evaluated on how they appear to others, and they come to experience their own bodies in terms of how they appear to others, rather than how they feel and their potential on the inside. The second component is shame (internalizing the

standards for the cultural body and making this part of one's identity). When a woman does not achieve what she deems are those standards, shame can incur. A woman with high body shame feels like a bad person for not achieving the cultural standards rather than just feeling bad about her appearance. McKinley found that higher amounts of body shame create lower body esteem, restricted eating and disordered eating in younger women and higher level of surveillance. The third component of OBC is control beliefs (thinking that one can control how one looks). This is encouraged through the social construction of the body (Bordo, 1993) and necessary for judgments based on appearance to appear as fair (Wolf, 1991). Control beliefs also allow a person to persist in pursuing goal and handle stressful instances better (Taylor, 1989). According to McKinley, control beliefs can help in reduce stress but may also contribute to unhealthy habits such as disordered eating, restricted eating, and excessive exercise. Her study with Hyde (1996) found that more control beliefs is related to higher body esteem and to higher level of dieting in the middle age group and to more disordered eating in the younger female population. In her study, McKinley found that mothers had less body shame (feeling that they are not a good person if they do not meet the standard for appearance) and less body surveillance than daughters. In her research there were no differences found in body esteem, appearance control beliefs, or restricted eating even though mothers' weight more and were less happy with their weight than daughters. Objectified body consciousness construct was related to measures of psychological well-being for

both daughters and mothers., body esteem was more strongly corelated with some measures of daughters' psychological well-being than mothers.

Disordered Eating

In their research, Tiggeman and Kurig (2004) found that disordered eating and depression were both predicted because of self-objectification and the habitual surveillance of the self, and that self-objectification has its effect on depressed mood and disordered eating via appearance anxiety, body shame, and awareness and flow of internal bodily states. The research also found that there was a relationship between depressed mood and disordered eating, due to self-objectification leading to self-surveillance, in turns leading to appearance anxiety and increased body shame resulting in greater depressed mood and disordered eating. Their study confirmed that our culture focuses on external appearance resulting in negative consequences for both women and men (Tiggeman & Kurig, p. 306-308).

Muehlenkamp and Saris-Baglama (2004) also researched depressive symptoms and disordered eating in a sample of undergraduate women. Their study examined self-objectification and how it may lead to a lack of internal awareness, which can mediate the relationship between self-objectification and bulimia, restrictive eating, and depressive symptoms. Their results found that self-objectification had a direct relationship to depressive symptoms, bulimia, and restrictive eating. The mediational role of internal awareness was relevant for

depressive symptoms but not for bulimic symptoms or restrictive eating. Depressive symptoms however did have a relationship between bulimic symptoms and self-objectification. Therefore, to some extent self-objectification is both indirectly and directly related to disordered eating (p. 376).

Moradi, Dirks, and Matteson (2005) extended research on disordered eating by linking existing studies on objectification theory with self-objectification, eating disorder symptoms and body shame. This research highlighted the critical role of sexual objectification as a significant pre-cursor to disorder eating. Morry and Staska (2001) investigated college women's exposure to beauty magazines as one type of sexual objectification and found that women's exposure to beauty magazines was related to higher levels eating disorders and self- objectification and found that higher exposure to beauty magazine was related to higher internalization of beauty cultural standards, and this internalization of beauty cultural standards in turn was related to eating disorders and self-objectification. Moradi et al.'s (2005) study provided the first examination of the role of reported sexual objectification experiences in a model of eating disorder through symptoms based on objectification theory and alongside examined the role of body surveillance, internalization of beauty sociocultural standards, and body shame. Their results showed that sexual objectification correlates with eating disorders and that internalization of cultural standards and body surveillance also correlate. These findings point to body shame and internalization as key mechanisms in linking sexual objectification with eating disorder symptoms.

10

These results expanded objectification literature by providing support for the indirect and direct links of sexual objectification with eating disorder symptoms.

Depression and Shame

Szymanski and Henning (2007) also studied self-objectification using objectification theory as it applied to depression in women. They focused on the influence of self-objectification in habitual body monitoring, increases in body shame, a reduced sense of flow, and a greater appearance anxiety. Their results confirmed that female mental health is negatively affected through our culture of sexually objectifying women. Szymanski and Henning's research (2007) supported a key premise of Objectification Theory – that the sexual objectification of women is related to significant mental health problems among women.

Shame is a negative emotion that involves experiencing the desire to disappear, hide, or die (Lewis, 1992, p.75). This occurs when a person evaluates themselves in comparison to some internalized standard and conclude that they have failed to meet what they deem worthy. In U.S. culture, the ideal standard of the women's form is hard to match and leads to comparison and feelings of shame and inadequacy for many females. In their study, Mercurio and Landry (2008) sought to examine self-objectification in relation to feelings of satisfaction with life and feelings of self-worth through its association to body shame.

Greenleaf (2005) examined self-objectification in relation to flow experiences during disordered eating, body shame, and physical exercise among

older and younger women. Greenleaf describes flow as "the feeling of being 'in the zone' and is an intrinsically motivating experience" (p. 52). Csikszentmihalyi (1990) studied flow experiences and outlined different characteristics, one of them being the loss of self-awareness or self-consciousness because of being totally submerged in the activity at hand. Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) suggested that self-objectification increases one's awareness of the self and how others view the self, in turns creating a heightened self-consciousness and reducing flow experience creating a loss of self-consciousness.

Personal Safety Anxiety and Fear of Rape

According to the research by Calogero, Tylka, Siegel, Pina, and Roberts (2020), everyday encounter with sexual objectification creates a nonspecific sense of danger that threatens personal safety for females in many different situations such as through street harassment, on social media, or in private spaces and amid partners, friends, and colleagues. Women and girls' personal safety are a real threat. Objectification theory proposes that sexual objectification encounters provide an ever-present reminder for females to feel worried and concerned about their safety and in turns restrict their movement and freedom (Calegero et al., 2020). In their study, Calegero et al. (2020) created a new scale to assess the construct of personal safety anxiety and directly investigated personal safety as a phenomenological experience that included restricted freedom of movement as a constraint on females' lived experience. The

researchers helped shed light on the connection with safety-based concerns and appearance-based concerns in women. They found a correlation between appearance anxiety and personal safety anxiety. These findings suggest women's behavioral and psychological investment in their appearance fosters both concerns about existential and evaluation concerns about how they will be treated (Calegero et al., 2020). In a culture where sexual objectification begins early and values how women look above all other attributes (Zurbriggen & Robert, 2013), physical beauty turns into a form of social currency for females (Calogero, Tylka, Donnelly, McGretick, & Leger, 2017) creating an increase in appearance anxiety.

Calogero et al. (2017) tested their hypothesis titled "beauty as currency" and illustrated how the belief in beauty as a currency for women is positively associated with self-objectification, and negatively associated with gender activism, supporting the gender status quo. They claim that "if women believe beauty is their primary social currency, then women will be more likely to support an environment where this currency is accepted and worth the effort" (p. 69). In the United States, the gender status quo heavily rewards and scrutinizes women's external appearance and physique, therefore creating such an environment (Calegero et al., 2017). Their study brought about insight into how gendered ideologies about females' bodies impede their engagement in collective action; according to the researchers, collective action is the most

effective way to bring about social justice and social change (Calegero et al., 2017).

According to Fairchild and Rudman (2008), women's bodies are consistently and constantly regarded as sexual objects in American culture through pornography and advertising, and other mass media. The unsolicited sexual attention experienced in both stranger harassment and sexual harassment is another example of female being looked at as sexual objects. Fairchild and Rudman (2008) found that women experience stranger harassment frequently (public sexual attention from strangers) which has a negative impact on their well-being.

Warr (1985) studied the fear of rape among urban women and found they fear rape more than any other crime, especially younger women. The researcher stated that the high fear of rape stems from it being perceived as relatively likely and extremely serious, and that it is closely related with other offenses such as robbery and homicide. Warr's study found that two-thirds of younger women pass through a period of moderate to high fear restricting their activities.

Body Monitoring and Aging

As a girl becomes a woman, she becomes more fully initiated in the culture of sexual objectification triggering self-conscious body monitoring, deleterious subjective experience such as anxiety and shame, becomes less motivated, experiences lack of connection to internal body states, and an

increased risk of psychological mental health outcomes (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Martin (1996) found that girls going through puberty found that boys and men often comment and notice their breasts. "Bigger breasts mean a girl is more sexually available or adventurous" (Martin, 1996, p. 31). Adolescent girls then learn to be evaluated from the opposite sex as a body instead of herself creating further body monitoring in girls and women.

Another stage of life where women appear to be affected with sexual objectification is during the transition of midlife. After the age of 40, generally during menopause time, sociobiological and traditional theories found that women's well-being declines once they are no longer able to conceive children (Gergen, 1990). Fredrickson and Roberts' objectification theory predicts that the way women are affected by mental health risk associated with aging is determined by how they "(a) internalize the feminine ideal prescribed by a culture that objectifies the female body, and (b) encounter contexts that objectify her own body" (p. 194). For a lot of women aging means becoming unlovable and unattractive (Roderheaver & Stohs, 1991), unemployable (Wolf, 1991), and invisible (Kashak, 1992). Older women are often not seen in the media and when they are they generally look much younger than their age (Itzin, 1986). Women are continuously sold the idea that looking young is crucial to their well-being helping the cosmetic surgery industry thrive and perpetuating females' mental health risk. Objectification theory predicts that older women are more likely in favor of a more subjective youthful appearance (Roderheaver & Stohs).

The challenge with treating and preventing self-objectification stems from its connection to the recurrent, persistent, ubiquitous, and permissible standard that is part of the daily lives of so many women (Tylka, & Augustus-Horvath, 2011). It is also challenging to prevent because women are taught that being observant about their physical appearance will lead to increased social power and societal rewards (Breines, Crocker, & Garcia 2008; Unger, 1979). These perceived advantages can prevent women from understanding the long-term effect that self-objectification has on well-being.

CHAPTER THREE

RESISTING OR OVERCOMING SELF-OBJECTIFICATION

There are multiple ways that females can subvert and resist objectification. Mckinley and Hide (1996) argued that bringing attention to self-objectification is important because it gives women the chance to think about how negative body experiences could be changed.

According to Greenleaf (2005) intervention is especially needed to look at strategies for reducing self-objectification and body shame which could result in reducing disordered eating behavior and attitudes. These efforts to resist sexual objectification may help enhance females' psychological well-being in contemporary culture which is rooted in objectifying women's bodies. This however cannot remove the trauma that women experience their whole life through self-objectification.

As suggested by previous research, the first step in raising awareness of self-objectification and helping to create an environment of self-compassion in women, is to create a program that educates them about sexual objectification. Included would be a talk about how sexual objectification is a result of our society which evaluates people based on their appearance rather than on their inner self. Women can then be given examples to help label and identify instances of sexual objectification such as catcalls, being told that they look great or that they need to lose weight, comparing themselves to other women's bodies, or their partners' gazing at other women's bodies (Tylka, Augustus-Horvath, 2011).

Calogero and Tylka (2017) view the practices and beliefs of sexual objectification of women and feminine beauty ideology that are deeply entrenched in contemporary culture as inevitable, but the researchers talk about conceptualizations of beauty in a way that sometimes seem to serve women well. Like for example it being associated with self-compassion, body image quality of life and body appreciation. However, as we have seen above, they are many negative consequences that should be addressed so that a women can feel happy and safe. I will discuss in the next section ways to prevent or fight self-objectification.

CHAPTER FOUR

STRATEGIES TO PREVENT OR FIGHT SELF-OBJECTICATION

In this section I review what research suggests as the most efficacious strategies and techniques for developing a program to help women overcome or resist self-objectification.

One of the ways suggested by Tylka and Augustus-Horvath (2011) to help women get in touch with the functionality and miraculous nature of their bodies, is to create a program that would include ways of learning to prevent self-objectification all together. However this would take time to build a culture where women are less likely to self-objectify as it is deeply entrenched in contemporary culture and according to the researchers it will be met with much resistance from the entities that profit from sexually objectifying the female body as well as from the sexist man who feel entitled to look at women's bodies and from the women who have internalized the messages from society to use their sexuality to gain power. Thus, Tylka and Augustus-Horvath suggest that it is imperative to create individual-based strategies aimed at preventing women from engaging in self-objectification. The first part, according to the researchers would be to promote a contextualization schema by teaching girls and women to learn to identify self-objectification. According to Tylka and Augustus-Horvath, if we don't help women and girls discuss and articulate the ill effects of sexual objectification and create a schema to contextualize it, then they will be a greater chance for them to self-objectify or view themselves as a sexual object. Women can often feel powerless

against the standards of unrealistic evaluations that are based on appearance

and can use many different means (dieting, cosmetic surgery) to assert control

(Petterson, Grippo, Tantleff-Dunn, 2008). However, by creating a schema like

Tylka and Augustus-Horvath suggest, it will help women buffer this feeling of

powerlessness by placing the blame on the objectifier. By contextualizing self-

objectification women's self-worth would be less contingent on others evaluation

whether positive or negative. Their self-worth would stay intact, and they would

feel empowered knowing that they are able to see and deflect sexual

objectification.

Preventing Self-objectification

The method studied by Tylka and Augusts-Horvath (2011) of discussing

sexual objectification would be the first step talked about in this project for

preventing self-objectification by bringing to light this maladaptive society which

results in a culture that evaluates people based on their outer appearance rather

than on their inner qualities and behavior. According to Tylka and Augustus-

Horvath sexual objectification usually occurs in public and in unstructured

contexts where women and girls may find it hard to respond effectively and

powerfully at the time. Being assertive is key to be able to effectively challenge

others' objectifying behavior and comments. Talking about practicing and

maintaining appropriate boundaries in all relationships should be encouraged to

develop respect for themselves and empathy for others and this will help women

20

find their authenticity (Tylka & Augustus-Horvath). Other topics discussed by Tylka and Augustus-Horvath are avoiding body comparison (helping see when they are perpetuating sexual objectification by engaging in body comparison by instructing them to catch themselves in this behavior, reminding them that this is a way to objectify, and reaffirm their commitment to not promote this behavior).

Tylka and Augustus-Horvath also mention another area of discussion of understanding, regulating and confronting exposure to objectifying media images. They suggest that a program that includes targeting the body size and thin ideal shown in the media could be adapted specifically to target the media's use of sexual objectification. This will be an important part of my program as women who are confronted daily by media messages and images are likely to daily self-objectify (Harrison & Frederickson, 2003).

Healthy diet, exercise and body weight is very important to good health and well-being. Another topic of discussion would be on raising awareness of healthy eating to improve physical and psychological well-being and reduce the risk of objectification as studied by Prieto (2014). In her study, Prieto found that after only 12 weeks of dietary changes significant changes were seen in the participants such as blood pressure change, reduced cholesterol, and overall well-being.

Another part of the study would include emphasizing women's internal qualities following the Full of Ourselves prevention program (Steiner-Adair & Sjostrom, 2006) created for young girls to help prevent self-objectification via

enhancing feelings of empowerment. One of the examples of those activities

described by Tylka and Augusts-Horvath that will be incorporated in the

workshop includes the Tree of Strength exercise. Women will be told to write that

the names of other women they admire and respect. The participant will then

share the qualities with the group, once everyone has participated the facilitator

will emphasize that these qualities are more valuable than any external

appearance (Tylka & Augustus-Horvath).

Lastly, to prevent sexual objectification women can be taught ways to treat

self-objectification such as through exercise to honor the body. Honoring the

body's need for motion which should be pleasurable and fun rather than

strenuous, painful, and militant. Giving examples of exercises such as yoga,

dance, or Pilates which do not use objectification techniques to sexualize and

idealize the women body (Tylka and Augusts-Horvath).

Treating Self-Objectification

Several potentially successful interventions are suggested in the model by

Tylka and Augusts-Horvath, that demonstrates specific ways to help overcome

self-objectification. According to Tylka and Augusts-Horvath, self-objectification is

preserved by non-appreciative and shameful attitudes towards the body,

cognition that is disruptive and is internalized about the body, when there is a

lack of connection with the body, and when there is maladaptive actions or

behaviors geared to change the body. The techniques recommended by the

researchers are aimed to reduce women's tendencies to continue self-objectifying by revealing additional techniques.

The first step would be to place self-objectification in context by opening a dialogue on the positive, yet unfulfilling, superficial and short-lived benefits awarded to those who self-objectify. Being aware if the societal rewards help women and girls to externalize the blame rather than blaming themselves for self-objectifying (Tylka and Augusts-Horvath). According to Tylka and Augusts-Horvath, what should be discussed includes the harmful effects of self and sexual objectification to help the participants articulate times where their objectification limited their development, authenticity, body, relationship, spirit, and mind. After the discussion of preventing self-objectification are becoming more aware and are creating the ability to contextualize sexual objectification.

Mindfulness Meditation

Meditation is defined by Saini, Haseeb ,Taghi-Zada and Ng (2021) as a body and mind practices which focuses on interactions between the mind, brain, body and behavior, containing four main elements: a comfortable posture, an open attitude, a quiet location with little distraction and a focus of attention.

Mindfulness is defined by Kabat-Zinn (1994) as being present in present a non-judging manner with respect to both external stimuli and internal stimuli (emotions, thoughts, bodily sensation). According Kabat-Zinn (1994), "Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the

present moment, and nonjudgmentally" (p. 4). The value of mindfulness rests upon "our capacity for embodied awareness and on our ability to cultivate our relationship to that awareness" (Kabat-Zinn, 2013, p. xxvii).

Previous research showed that to promote connection with the body, a guided positive affirmation meditation can help participants treat themselves with love, care and respect and enhance feelings of empowerment. These appear to be crucial steps in resisting and overcoming self-objectivation.

Bahl, Milne, Ross, Mick, Grier, Chugani, and Boesen-Mariani (2016) looked at mindfulness as an antidote to habitual consumption and its negative consequences. They argue that a major cause of consumption-induced choices is mindlessness. "Millions of contemporary consumers sleepwalk through a fog of impulses, habits, addictions, compulsions, and decision biases" (p. 198). In their study the Bahl et al. researched mindfulness to highlight its potential for increasing the well-being of consumers across a broad intersection of social problems and the marketplace. They do so by first reviewing what mindfulness is, next they offer a description and definition of mindful consumption followed by ways on how it can promote societal, individual, and environmental well-being. To describe what mindfulness is the researchers used the view stemming from Buddhist traditions and known by Jon Kabat-Zinn in his founding program known as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (Williams and Kabat-Zinn 2013). According to Bahl et al., an alternative approach to mindfulness created by Langer (1989) views mindfulness through a contemporary cognitive psychology

lens, focusing primarily on creative cognition . Langer (1989) sees mindfulness

as a heightened state of wakefulness and state of involvement with an emphasis

on awareness of external stimuli, drawing of novel distinction and openness to

novelty and Kabat-Zinn (2013), on the other hand, emphasizes poor mental focus

and discipline (which can be fixed though mindfulness) as a main cause of

human distress.

Bahl et al. (2016) state that after reviewing multiple studies of both Kabat-

Zinn and Langer that they, as well as Hart et al. (2013), they conclude that

Kabat-Zinn's approach is more detailed and broader than Langer's. However,

they see views as concerning self-regulation, especially of automatic or reactive

autopilot habits of the mind. Bahl et al. describe mindfulness as a type of

consciousness that offers the ability to clearly see. Mindfulness enables an

immediate and direct experience of whatever is happening, instead of viewing

the world through attachment and memories which is distinct from

conceptualizing or thinking about the experience. According to Bahl et al. for the

untrained mind awareness is sidetracked regularly by a proliferation of

perceptions, memories, emotions, thoughts, and judgments which consume the

scarce resources of energy, time, and attention. Mindfulness fortunately can be

cultivated through the practice of mindfulness meditation, particularly by mental

training that teaches such techniques as stabilizing attention on an object of

concentration like body or breath sensations, or through open monitoring which

guides the mind in observation that is non-reactive in order to experience the

present moment. The researchers state that these types of mediations are crucial at developing the mind. The next part of Bahl et al's research is on how mindful consumption offers the potential of replacing mindless consumption. They define mindful consumption as paying attention (to what one watches reads and buys) through ongoing practice, with acceptance to emotions, bodily sensations, thoughts, and other internal stimuli.

Miller, Fletcher and Kabat-Zinn (1995) studied 22 medical patients with anxiety disorders over an eight-week period. Out of those patients, 20 of them showed significant reduction in anxiety and depression after a three-month follow up and 18 of them showed long term positive effects after a three-year follow up. The research concluded that stress reduction intervention from mindfulness meditation can have long-term positive effects in the treatment with people diagnosed with anxiety disorders. Anxiety has been linked to self-objectification in studies like the one described above from Calegero et al. (2020).

Mindfulness and the Brain

Hölzel, Lazar, Gard, Schuman-Olivier, Vago and Ott (2011) looked at the mechanism of how a mindfulness meditation worked through a conceptual and neural perspective. According to the researchers, a mindfulness practice, positively influence the improvement of health and treatment of disorders through the nonjudgmental awareness of experiences in the present moment. The study breaks down several factors though which mindful meditation has had positive

effects, such as body awareness, attention regulation, change in perspective of the self and emotion regulation. The researchers found that empirical research on structural and functional neuroimaging studies started to explore the underlying components through neuroscientific processes. They found that mindfulness practice is associated with neuroplastic changes in the,insula, temporo-parietal junction, fronto-limbic network, anterior cingulate cortex and default mode network structures which work in harmony to establish the pathways to self-regulation.

The first factor described by Holzel et al. is attention regulation. In attention meditation, attention rest on one object (body sensations, the breath, emotions, thoughts, visualization, or a mantra). Whenever the student remarks their mind has wondered off, they will bring it back to the chosen object. According to the researcher's neuroimaging studies have found that the anterior cingulate cortex (ACC) facilitates executive attention (Van Veen & Carter, 2002) by sensing the presence of conflict emerging from incompatible streams when processing information. With meditation the ACC may help with contributing to the maintenance of attention to resolve the conflict. Holzel et al. state that conflict monitoring through attention regulation seems to be an important factor that is often seen early in a practice of mindfulness. Attention regulation is a building block for other methods of mindfulness such as body awareness, which is the mindfulness practice that involves focuses attention on an internal feeling, such as breathing, emotions, and other sensations of the body. Farb et al. (2007)

found that the activation of insulin was found to be higher in people after a mindfulness course.

Holzel et al. also found that the secondary somatosensory area increased activation, this is related to the processing of exteroceptive sensory events. According to the researchers a higher awareness of the body's reaction to an emotional stimulus can lead to higher awareness in an individual's emotional life.

Yoga

Numerous studies have also suggested that yoga group practice may teach women to honor the body's need for movement, increase self-acceptance and enable resistance to self-objectification. Research has shown that potential exist for individuals through yoga movement to learn how to reconnect with themselves and with others, creating a more authentic and fulfilling existence and life (Head & Hammer, 2013).

Yoga and self-objectification have been studied through various lenses (Seldin, 2013; Cox, Ullrich-French, Cole, and D'Hondt-Taylor, 2015).Seldin (2013) studied females' body experiences in relations to their yoga practices, looking at the role that self-objectification and the changes of self-acceptance that arise with a consistent yoga practice. Seldin found that mindfulness-based yoga practice may enhance and heal womens' body experiences while lowering self-objectification. Seldin found that participants felt disconnected and experienced a lack of appreciation for their bodies prior to having a consistent

yoga practice. They also felt like they had an unhealthy relationship with food prior to starting yoga and found themselves comparing their bodies to other women's bodies and feeling inadequate. Seldin also reported that the participants found themselves abusing their bodies and being competitive and aggressive towards their bodies. Through their yoga practice the participants learned to connect and slow down the body and the mind and improve mindfulness, empowering them to respond to their needs rather than to try to comply and fit in with others' expectations. The participants also learn to appreciate and accept their bodies through the yoga which helped create improved self- acceptance.

In another study, Cox, Ullrich-French, Cole, and D'Hondt-Taylor (2015), looked at the relation of the role of state mindfulness during yoga in predicting self-objectification and stated that movement that uses mindfulness to draw attention to the body's sensations and functions rather than appearance may be one way to reduce self-objectification and improve associated consequences. In their research, the researchers followed participants that attended yoga classes and looked at their state mindfulness, physical self-concept, self-objectification and reasons for exercise. Cox et al.'s results found that body mindfulness during yoga class showed a decrease in self-objectification. Their findings support the view that being more mindful, especially regarding physical sensations like physical alignment and breathing may be an effective way to reduce self-objectification and support more internal reasons for physical activity.

Head and Hammer (2013) looked at how self-objectification contributes to women experiencing shame, lower self-esteem, and a lack of connection from their bodies and themselves. They use the Relational Cultural Theory (RCT) to examine ways of reconnecting with a person's authentic self and with others, and they claim that the practice of yoga incorporating breathwork also offers a way to connect and can help address the harm of self-objectification.

According to Head and Hammer, the last two decades of research on the physical practice (hatha) and philosophy of yoga demonstrates the effectiveness in treating a myriad of diseases, and more recently has proven to be beneficial in helping with the negative consequences of self-objectification. The researchers stated that potential exist for individuals, through the movement of yoga (and therapy), to learn how to reconnect with themselves and with others, creating a more authentic and fulfilling existence and life. Head and Hammer's research concluded that combining a yoga practice with RCT can offer individuals a synergetic relationship that enhances a healthy way of viewing the self and a way for cultivating authentic relationships.

Quantitative studies have been used to analyze the effects of yoga on self-objectification. Gard, Brach, Hözel, Noggle, Conboy, and Lazar (2012) investigated the effects of a yoga-based program on quality of life, mindfulness, perceived stress, and self-compassion in young adults. In their research Gard et al. found that participants in the program felt a decrease in perceived stress and an increase in quality of life, suggesting that yoga may be of value in cultivating

well-being. They also found that yoga-based and mindfulness-based programs might share similar mechanisms, creating options for individuals and making it possible "to generate hypothesis about the effects of a yoga-based programs based on the larger body of knowledge about the effects of mindfulness-based programs" (p. 173). According to Prichard and Tiggeman (2005) habitual exposure to circumstances that contain objectifying cues can lead to more concerns about one's appearance and higher risk of self-objectification. Impett et al. (2006) found yoga to be particularly effective at helping participants' stay focused on the experience of the movement itself. Gard et al. stated that the importance on being present in one's body makes it an ideal mode of exercise for looking at how attention to physical practice relates to self-objectification

Impett, Daubenmier and Hirshman (2006) examined the potential of yoga to counter the negative effects of self-objectification as well as to promote body embodiment (body responsiveness and awareness) and well-being. They found that there has been a dramatic increase of yoga in the West in the second half of the twentieth century. Often referred to as Hatha Yoga, this movement-based form of meditation and relaxation combines physical exercises, postures, and breathing techniques. The researchers' participants enrolled in a two-month immersion of yoga program and completed surveys. Results found that the women less objectified their bodies after participating in the immersion. More frequent yoga practice also showed an increase in body awareness, satisfaction with life, positive affect, as well as decreased negative affect.

Cox et al. (2016) followed participants in yoga classes that met two to three times a week during an eight-week period. Their results revealed significant decreases in self-objectification and increases in state mindfulness, physical self-concept, and health/fitness related reasons for exercise. Further findings showed that mindfulness during exercise was linked with increases in more internal reasons for exercise and decreases in self-objectification. This guided them in concluding that state mindfulness plays a part in predicting change in self-objectification and reasons for exercise during a yoga practice.

Daubenmier (2005) looked at whether yoga is associated with more positive body experiences through greater awareness of and responsiveness to bodily sensations, greater body satisfaction, lower self-objectification, and fewer eating disorders. According to Daubenmier few studies have looked at the effects of body-mind exercises and that yoga cultivates a direct experience of the body which may help counteract the consequences of self-objectification. The main goal of yoga according to Shiffman (1996), is to unify the body with the mind, in part by submerging oneself in sensations of the body that are subtle. It also has many other physical benefits such as flexibility, increased strength, and balance, and yoga practitioners are taught to feel the bodily sensation before, during and after a pose. Shiffman also writes that yoga emphasizes responsiveness to bodily sensations as well as body awareness, and that in yoga part of the skill is in perceiving how far to move into a pose. Therefore, people who practice yoga learn to listen to the sensations of their bodies for guidance and value their

bodies' feedback. This helps diminish the importance of physical appearance to

one's overall sense of self and physical self-concept through both

responsiveness and enhanced awareness of the physical abilities and autonomic

processes. In her research Daubenmier found that yoga practitioners reported

more favorably by being particularly effective for minimizing self-objectification

due to its emphasis on body responsiveness and awareness.

CHAPTER FIVE

APPLYING RESEARCH TO RESIST SELF-OBJECTIFICATION

Here is my proposed workshop design, based on the previous research

reviewed above:

The workshop will be approximately 60 minutes long and divided into two

discussion sections and two yoga/mindfulness practice sections.

Section 1: The first 10 minutes of the talk will focus on the impacts of media on

self-image. This follows the research by Aubrey, Henson, Hopper, and Smith

(2009) which examined the effect of the media to extend the understanding of

how visual depictions of females' bodies in the media might provoke women to

self-objectify by prioritizing their concern over how their bodies look over how

they think, feel, or act. I will discuss how this is a result of our contemporary

culture which evaluates people based on their appearance rather than on their

inner self. Following Tylka and Augustus-Horvath's (2011) research, this portion

of the talk includes ways to help girls and women learn to identify self-

objectification by giving examples and helping them identify with their own

personal experiences. According to Tylka and Augustus-Horvath sexual

objectification usually occurs in public and unstructured context where women

and girls may find it hard to respond effectively and powerfully at the time.

Discussion topics include the importance of being assertive to effectively

challenge others' objectifying behavior and comments. Talking about practicing

and maintaining appropriate boundaries in all relationships to develop respect for themselves and empathy for others and to help women find their authenticity and avoid body comparison (Tylka and Augustus-Horvath).

Section 2: This next 10 minutes of the workshop is a discussion of self-objectification and the supporting research which includes body shame (Lewis 1992; Mercurio & Laundry, 2008), safety (Calogero, Tylka, Siegel, Pina, & Roberts, 2020), body surveillance (Frederickon and Roberts; Aubrey, Henson, Hopper, Smith) appearance anxiety (Calogero et al., 2020; McKinley, 1999), decreased concentration or flow experiences on physical and mental tasks (Greenleaf, 2005), restriction of freedom of movement (Calogero, Tantleff-Dunn & Thompson, 2011; Fredrickson & Robert), disordered eating (Noll & Fredrickson, 1998; Tiggeman and Kurig 2004, Moradi, Dirks, Mateson), depression (Muehlenkamp & Saris-Baglama, 2002; Tiggemann & Slater, 2001; Szymanski & Henning, 2007), fear of rape through gender-based violence and harassment (Fairchild & Rudman, 2008; Warr, 1985), and reduced awareness of internal bodily states (e.g., fatigue, emotions, hunger).

Section 3: The following 30 minutes is a yoga class to honor the body's need for movement. According to Cox, Ullrich-French, Cole, and D'Hondt-Taylor (2015), movement that uses mindfulness to draw attention to the body's sensations and functions rather than appearance may be one way to reduce self-objectification and improve associated consequences. The class includes guided poses and

affirmations to help connect participants with their mind-body connection, promote body embodiment, and well-being.

Section 4: The last 10 minutes closes with a guided meditation. According to Bahl et al. for the untrained mind awareness is sidetracked regularly by a proliferation of perceptions, memories, emotions, thoughts, and judgments which takes over energy, time, and attention which are all for consumers limited resources. Fortunately, mindfulness can be cultivated through the practice of mindfulness meditation, particularly by mental training that teaches techniques such as stabilizing attention on the object of concentration (like the body and breath sensations) or through open monitoring which guides the mind in observation that is non-reactive to experience the present moment. This meditation follows the practice of yoga Nidra which focuses on connecting to the body using the breath, and resting the attention on body sensations, emotions, thoughts, visualization, and closing with a mantra.

The workshop will be concluded by a close off written assessment summary of my own reflection in a debrief of how I think the workshop went.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

Through this combination of educational information about self-objectification, combined with mindfulness-based body movement practices, participants will be better able to recognize self-objectification in their own lives, and learn techniques to connect with their bodies and self-image in healthier ways.

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