THE INFLUENCE OF SEXUALIZATION IN MEDIA ON SELF-ESTEEM IN WOMEN
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INTRODUCTION

* Body dissatisfaction is a threat to women’s self-esteem.
* Is the media partly to blame?
  * Airbrushing, editing, filters, deceptive camera angles, and unrealistic ideals
  * Misusing a platform for social ideals
INTRODUCTION

Themes:
- Sexualization
  - “Women are often defined as their bodies. . . objects that exist for the pleasure of men” (Sheldon, 2010)
  - Cultural and self-objectification can lead to lower body esteem/body shame (Sheldon, 2010)
- Ultra-thin Ideal
  - The average woman is 5’4 and 140 lbs. The average model is 5’11 and 120 lbs (Sheldon, 2010)
Women with body dissatisfaction and/or the predisposition to anorexia are put at risk by thin-ideal media (Cameron & Ferraro, 2004; Kim & Lennon, 2007, Sheldon, 2010).

Women who were dissatisfied with their bodies showed a further decrease in esteem after reading fitness magazines for 15 minutes; those who were satisfied did not (Cameron & Ferraro, 2004).
Our Goal: To determine whether or not reading a highly sexualized magazine would influence women’s self-esteem and body confidence ratings.

Hypotheses:
- Reading Cosmopolitan (high sexualization) for 5 minutes will be correlated with a decrease in self-esteem as measured by confidence in appearance ratings and a decrease in mood ratings (compared to a moderately sexualized magazine and a neutral magazine)
METHOD: PARTICIPANTS

- 45 participants
- Ages ranged from 18-53
- Mean age = 21.96
METHOD: PARTICIPANTS

- Randomly selected
- All female convenience sample
METHOD: MATERIALS

- Survey
  - Contained 4 questions, answered using Likert Scale
- 3 Magazines:
  - Cosmopolitan, Family Circle, Car and Driver
- Computer
  - For the use of random.org
- Timer
Randomly assigned to a magazine using random.org

Participants instructed to read magazines for 5 minutes

When the 5 minutes were up, participants filled out a survey
METHOD: PROCEDURE

* 4 questions on survey
* 2 distractors, the other 2 were measured
1. “To what extent did you enjoy this magazine?”
2. “How would you rate your mood after reading this magazine?”
3. “How confident do you feel about your appearance?”
4. “How likely are you to subscribe to this magazine?”
Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Participant Ratings of Mood and Feelings About Appearance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Magazine</th>
<th>Mood</th>
<th>Appearance</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$n$</td>
<td>$M (SD)$</td>
<td>95% CI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car and Driver</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.44(0.81)</td>
<td>(3.0, 3.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Circle</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.07(1.10)</td>
<td>(2.5, 3.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cosmopolitan</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.86(0.66)</td>
<td>(3.5, 4.2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* CI = confidence interval. Participants rated mood after reading on a 5-point Likert scale from “very unhappy” to “very happy” and rated feelings about appearance on a 5-point Likert scale from “not at all confident” to “very confident.”
RESULTS

* Data was gathered in Excel and ran in SPSS
* Researchers used two one-way ANOVAs
* Analyzed whether the mean ratings of mood and appearance differed significantly depending on which magazine the participants read
RESULTS

The graph shows participant ratings for different questions related to mood and appearance. The categories are Car and Driver, Family Circle, and Cosmopolitan.
RESULTS

* No mean differences between groups were found to be significant on rating of appearance or rating of mood

* \( F(2,42)=2.92, \ p > .05 \)

* \( F(2,42)=2.51, \ p > .05 \)

* The data was trending in the direction of lower ratings of appearance and higher mood ratings for Cosmo readers
**DISCUSSION**

* Overall, the data was not found to be significant.

* However, the participants reading Cosmopolitan rated a higher mood on average, but the confidence levels rated were lower after exposure to the magazine.
The data was trending in the direction to support our hypothesis, however was found insignificant.

If the sample size was larger, perhaps there would be significance.
STRENGTHS

* Using three different magazines provides good comparison
* Assignment to magazines was randomized through random.org
* It was a simple experiment and we were able to conduct our research in the allotted time period
LIMITATIONS

* Sample of convenience
* Small sample size
* Only female participants

* Although ages ranged from 18 to 53, most of the participants were college-aged women (mean age: 21.96)
* Only viewing the magazine for 5 minutes
Future Directions

- Conducting this study with men to determine the role gender may play in these findings
- The effects of other forms of media, such as television
- Run the experiment with a larger sample size
- Conducting a pretest and posttest design to determine changes in self-esteem
REFERENCES


