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Objectifying others: Social psychological perspectives

L'objectivation d'autrui : approches psychosociales

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“I want to congratulate our new member of parliament. She speaks well. She is smart. And (...) she is pretty” (La Libre, October 22, 2014). This is how Belgian MP Nawal Benhamou was greeted by one of her male colleagues after making her arrival in the Chamber. Being appraised in terms of one’s appearance, in contexts when appearance is, or should be, irrelevant, is much more prevalent for women than men. The notion of sexual objectification is typically used to refer to this experience of being treated as a “body” rather than as a “person”. Condemning such treatment, even when on the surface it appears benign or complimentary, has featured prominently on the agenda of feminist activists. In parallel, the term has been present in scholarly feminist writings since the 1970s but it has gained popularity since the 2000s especially.

The concept of objectification has featured more notably in scholarly writings in English than in French, although it was used by the philosopher Jean Baudrillard (1975) in the early 1970s. In French, the concept of objectification is used in the vernacular.

Assembling this issue would not have been possible without the help of the reviewers who meticulously considered all submissions. We wish to thank them warmly, as well as Eva Green who was the action editor on the manuscripts co-authored by the guest editors. Our gratitude also extends to the Université Libre de Bruxelles that supported the second editor’s stay in Brussels in May 2014 as we prepared this issue.

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The term “femme-objet” indeed refers to a woman who is considered as “a thing, a focus of sexual desire” (Larousse dictionary). French culture is also well known for its celebration of female appearance (e.g., manifested through clothing and cosmetics). How objectifying treatment may disempower women and contribute to the creation and reproduction of “masculine domination” (Bourdieu, 2001) has preoccupied French feminists since Simone de Beauvoir (1953) at least. For example, Colette Guillaumin (1978), while eschewing the term “objectification”, argues that (in contemporary society) “the core of the relation between a man and a woman consists in *physical use*. *A physical use which expressed in its most concise and succinct form is sexual use*” (p. 12). In sum, historically, French writings as well as French popular culture have much to offer to the study of objectification.

As objectification research has gained popularity, especially in American gender studies, the term has started to dovetail a variety of different meanings, yielding a somewhat muddled conceptual picture. Philosopher Martha Nussbaum attempted to put some order in this confusion by delineating its different meanings (Nussbaum, 1995; see also LaCroix & Pratto, 2015). All fall under a common umbrella: “treating as an object what is really, not an object, what is, in fact, a human being” (p.257). Yet, in spite of this popularity, very little research had until then sought to consider the psychological underpinnings and consequences of objectification empirically. When conducting such research, the use of methods that seek to maximize objectivity and internal validity appears as an important concern given the roots of the concept in feminist activism.

The lack of empirical research on objectification was especially blatant before the feminist struggle was imported into social psychology via “objectification theory” (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997), an attempt to address the consequences of the focus placed on women’s appearances rather than on their subjective experiences, emotions and mental health. The theory argued that women come to perceive themselves through the gaze of others, engaging in what Fredrickson and Roberts coined “self-objectification” (see also Bartky, 1990). This theory has generated a vast amount of empirical research, which has generally validated

its claims (e.g., Moradi & Huang, 2008). In line with Fredrickson and Roberts' original model, this research has been primarily focused on the targets rather than the perpetrators of objectification, although both perspectives are clearly connected (see Gervais, Allen, Campomizzi, & Klein, 2015; Heflick & Goldenberg, 2014; Loughnan et al., 2015; Tang & Harris, 2015).

However, objectification theory has done little to advance our understanding of who, when, how and why people engage in objectification toward other people. As a matter of fact, in spite of Nussbaum's (1995) pioneering work, until very recently, we actually know very little about what it means – from a psychological perspective – to objectify others. In the past five years, research addressing these questions has started to surface in the social psychological literature (for an early review, see Gervais, Bernard, Klein, & Allen, 2013). Our purpose in this special issue is to present cutting-edge work addressing the objectification of others. In doing so, we have considered both broad theoretical contributions and more empirically focused perspectives, yielding what we view as a particularly rich combination of outputs. Fortunately, some of the leading scholars in the field have responded to our initiative. In the remainder of this introduction, we shall introduce the contributions to this special issue.

Providing a foundation for the social psychology of objectifying others, Morris and Goldenberg (2015), retrace the history of (self-)objectification research. They then advance a theoretical distinction between two different ways in which people can be objectified: a focus on their appearance and a focus on their sexual properties. These two forms of objectification had previously been confounded. In addition to providing a succinct summary of existing self- and other-objectification research, Morris and Goldenberg make a convincing case that appearance-based compared to sex-based objectification can generate distinct and may reflect different underlying processes. Specifically, they suggest that appearance-based objectification may lead to the perception of women as objects whereas sexualization encourages animalization of women.

Bernard, Gervais, Allen, Campomizzi and Klein (2015) then provide an empirical consideration of basic perceptual and cognitive bases

of objectification. They take the “sexualized woman = object” literally and examine whether sexualized women are perceived (at least on a cognitive level) like objects. They indeed find evidence consistent with this claim, showing that sexualized women are perceived in fragmented piecemeal ways much like everyday objects. They also link objectification of the self to objectification of others by considering whether such cognitive objectification is correlated with self-objectification.

Puvia and Vaes (2015) also consider objectification from a cognitive perspective, focusing on an important cognitive moderator – the inclusion of the subgroup of sexually objectified women into the broader category of women– of dehumanization of sexually objectified women. In addition, they shed light on a somewhat perplexing finding in the existing objectification literature: both men *and women* tend to objectify and dehumanize women. In two studies, they show that women who capitalize on the sexually objectifying culture to promote their interests are particularly likely to be dehumanized by female participants relative to women who emphasize how they are victims of male sexual objectification. Thus, this contribution identifies both cognitive and motivational underpinnings of objectification as well as sheds light on important factors that may temper the dehumanization of sexually objectified women.

The next paper considers a phenomenon that is sometimes equated with objectification, or viewed as a more general form of it: dehumanization, the focus of increasing scholarly interest in recent years as well. More precisely, Tang and Harris’ (2015) contribution addresses the link between moral transgressions and dehumanization of self and others. They especially focus on two forms of moral transgressions and show that these exert different effects on dehumanization of others, especially. Specifically, they suggest that the violation of moral values, which they define as subjective, leads to the dehumanization of the victim of this transgression. This may occur in an effort to make this transgression more legitimate. This dehumanization, however, does not happen when more objective moral principles are violated which, according to Tang and Harris, are less flexible and amenable to trade-offs. Like Puvia and Vaes (2015), this paper highlights the central role of cognitive

construals in objectification and dehumanization. Like Bernard et al. (2015), they also focus on the interplay of objectified and dehumanized views of the self and others.

While the first four papers focus primarily on the basic cognitive and motivational underpinnings of self- and other-objectification and dehumanization, the last two empirical papers provide a broader cultural context through which to consider these factors, which was central to the original postulation of objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Indeed, published research on sexual objectification has almost exclusively relied on Western samples. It is therefore of primary importance to address whether it is specific to Western cultures. Via a 7-nations study conducted in all continents (except Africa and Antarctica), Loughnan, Fernandez, Vaes, Anjum, Aziz, Harada, Holland, Singh, Puvia, and Tsuchiya (2015) come to the conclusion that Westerners are more likely to objectify others (be they male or female) and the self than non-Westerners.

Providing a complementary investigation to Loughnan et al. (2015) and focusing on cultural orientation differences in Americans, Gervais, Bernard, and Riemer (2015) identify individualism as an important predictor of objectification. Interestingly, they find that individualism only predicts objectification when it is paired with a focus on vertical power differentials. Social comparison processes appear to be an important mediator that links vertical individualism and the tendency to engage in objectifying behaviors toward others. Taken together, Loughnan et al. (2015) and Gervais et al. (2015) suggest that the study of objectification would benefit from a focus on both micro (e.g., cognitive processes, psychological motivation) and macro level (e.g., structural and system variables) factors.

As objectification and dehumanization research has gained popularity in social psychology, the risk for conceptual confusions between these two terms as well as among the different realities they dovetail, has reemerged. 20 years after Nussbaum (1995), LaCroix and Pratto (2015) return to the meanings isolated by the philosopher specifically focusing on instrumentality and map them with the taxonomy of dehumanizing outcomes proposed by Holland and Haslam (2014). They also propose a broader notion of objectification that goes beyond the sexual and

appearance realms. Specifically, they show that all of the phenomena sharing the umbrella of “objectification” can be organized along two general dimensions: treating others as tools (i.e., instrumentalization) on the one hand, and denial of personhood on the other. This parsimonious classification allows them to distinguish objectification from closely related concepts (e.g., animalization, prejudice, ingroup bias) and to set elements of an agenda for future research on the topic.

Altogether, we are confident that the papers included in this special issue contribute significantly to the advancement of objectification research and will inspire new avenues of research in years to come.

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Women, objects, and animals: Differentiating between sex- and beauty-based objectification

Femme, objets et animaux: différencier l'objectivation basée sur le sexe et la beauté

Kasey Lynn Morris*
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Abstract

Philosophers, feminist scholars and psychologists converge on the notion that objectification involves a denial of humanity; however, the nature of this dehumanization is ambiguous. Existing research provides evidence that objectified women are associated with, and perceived similarly to, objects and also with animals, but little attention has been placed on what it actually means to be "objectified." Objectification is sometimes operationalized through sexualization, and other times through a focus on beauty, or appearance devoid of sexual content. Here, we provide a review of the existing research on objectification, attempting to reconcile these ambiguities, and considering whether the manner in which a woman is objectified informs the type of dehumanization that results. We posit that when

Résumé

Les philosophes, les théoriciens féministes et les psychologues s'accordent à considérer l'objectivation comme un déni d'humanité ; toutefois, la nature de cette déshumanisation est ambiguë. Les travaux existants suggèrent que les femmes objectivées sont associées cognitivement à des objets ainsi qu'à des animaux, mais on a accordé peu d'attention à ce que le terme objectivation recouvre réellement. Le concept est parfois opérationnalisé à travers la sexualisation et, en d'autres instances, à travers une focalisation sur la beauté ou l'apparence, sans connotation sexuelle. Nous proposons une revue des travaux portant sur l'objectivation, en tentant de dissiper ces équivoques et d'examiner si la façon dont une femme est objectivée nous informe quant au type de déshumanisation qui en résulte.

Key-words

Sex-based
objectification, beauty-
based objectification,
dehumanization

Mots-clés

Objectivation sexuelle,
objectivation basée
sur la beauté,
déshumanisation

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women are portrayed with a focus on beauty or appearance (beauty-based objectification), this leads to an association with objects, and that it is when this focus includes sexualization (sex-based objectification) that they are associated with animals. We draw on existing literature to examine this framework, and conclude with directions for research that can test this position directly.

Nous défendons la thèse suivante : lorsque la représentation des femmes se focalise sur leur apparence (objectivation basée sur la beauté), ceci donne lieu à une association aux objets ; c'est lorsque cette focalisation inclut la sexualisation (objectivation sexuelle) qu'elles sont associées à des animaux. Nous nous fondons sur la littérature existante pour examiner cette conceptualisation, et concluons en proposant des pistes de recherche permettant de tester directement cette hypothèse.

Instances of the objectification of women in Western culture are apparent. Women are overtly sexualized, with their bodies displayed for the use and pleasure of others (e.g., in pornography, and the mass mailing of lingerie catalogs, billboards and television commercials), and are subject to sexually evaluative commentary (e.g., catcalls, and on almost every television sitcom; cf. Collins, 2011). Even when the sexual aspects of women are not relevant or focused on, women, and girls, encounter a profound focus on their physical appearance. Popularity and career success hinge on their appearance (more so than for boys and men, e.g., Berscheid & Walster, 1974; Dor, Ferguson, & Langwith, 2010). Moreover, accomplished, professional women often struggle to have their “voice” heard above the chatter surrounding what they look like (e.g., in U.S. politics, Sarah Palin during the 2008 presidential election, and now the First Lady Michelle Obama’s bangs, biceps, and clothing choices). Not surprisingly, women respond by continuously monitoring their own appearance, depriving themselves of cognitive resources (and time and money) that could be invested elsewhere. Researchers and activists have documented the prevalence and consequences of such objectifying treatment (e.g., APA Task Force, 2007; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997), but still, there is ambiguity surrounding what it actually means to be objectified.

Body parts reduction and self-objectification in the objectification of sexualized bodies

Réduction aux parties du corps et auto-objectivation dans l'objectivation de corps sexualisés

*Philippe Bernard**

*Sarah Gervais***

*Jill Allen****

*Sophie Campomizzi*****

*Olivier Klein******

Abstract

A recent study showed that people rely on piecemeal, analytic processing when viewing sexualized female (vs. male) bodies, suggesting that people perceived sexualized female bodies similarly to objects. This paper will examine whether cognitive objectification of sexualized female bodies is associated with a focus on women's body parts rather than on their whole bodies. In order to test our assertion, we asked participants to view photographs of sexual body parts or entire bodies of males and females and make recognition judgments. We predicted an interaction between target sex and recognition task, with better recognition of sexualized female body parts when presented in isolation than in the

Résumé

Une étude récente suggère que les hommes et les femmes perçoivent de façon analytique les corps féminins (vs. masculins) sexualisés, suggérant que les femmes sexualisées sont perçues de façon similaire aux objets. Cet article propose d'examiner si l'objectification cognitive des corps féminins sexualisés est associée à une focalisation sur les parties du corps féminin. En vue de tester cette proposition, nous avons demandé à des participants de regarder des photographies de parties de corps féminins et masculins présentés soit en isolation, soit dans le contexte d'un corps global, et de réaliser des jugements de reconnaissance. Nous prédisions une interaction entre le genre du corps sexualisé et la tâche

Key-words

Sexual objectification, self-objectification, configural processing, analytic processing, local and global

Mots-clés

Objectivation sexuelle, auto-objectivation, mode de traitement configural, mode de traitement analytique, local, global

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context of whole female bodies whereas we expected the opposite pattern for sexualized male bodies recognition. As hypothesized, people recognized female body parts better than their whole bodies. Nonetheless, male whole bodies were not recognized better than male body parts. Furthermore, we hypothesized that self-objectification would be correlated with body-recognition and correlational analyses revealed that more self-objectification was related to less whole body recognition and this tendency was more pronounced for female targets. By contrast, we did not find a positive link between self-objectification and sexual body parts recognition. Implications for objectification theory and directions for future research are discussed.

de reconnaissance, avec une meilleure reconnaissance des parties de corps féminin sexualisé lorsque ces parties sont présentées en isolation (vs. dans le contexte d'un corps global). Nous nous attendions à un pattern de résultats inverse en ce qui concerne la reconnaissance des corps masculins. Les résultats indiquent que les parties de corps féminins sont en effet mieux reconnues en isolation que dans le contexte d'un corps entier. En revanche, les parties de corps masculins n'ont pas été mieux reconnues dans le contexte d'un corps entier. De plus, nous prédisions que l'auto-objectification serait associée aux scores de reconnaissance du corps et l'analyse des corrélations a révélé que plus le niveau d'auto-objectification des participants est élevé, plus les scores de reconnaissance des corps entiers est faible. Cette tendance est davantage marquée pour la perception des corps féminins. En revanche, nous n'avons pas trouvé de corrélation entre le trait d'auto-objectification et la perception des parties de corps. Les implications pour la théorie de l'objectification et les recherches futures seront également discutées.

When sexually objectified, women may be reduced to their sexualized body parts destined to satisfy others' needs and desires (Bartky, 1990; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Sexual objectification is widely conveyed by the visual media that often depicts female bodies and to a lesser extent male bodies in sexualized and piecemeal ways with sexual body parts highlighted instead of whole bodies (e.g., Reichert & Carpenter, 2004). Recent research showed that people are more likely to rely on piecemeal, analytic processing when recognizing sexualized

Promoters versus victims of objectification: Why women dehumanize sexually objectified female targets

*Promotrices vs. victimes d'objectivation: pourquoi les femmes déshumanisent
d'autres femmes sexuellement objectivées*

*Elisa Puvia**
*Jeroen Vaes***

Abstract

Recent findings show that women dehumanize their sexually objectified female counterparts. The present studies propose that women do so because they usually perceive them as promoters of an objectifying culture. Presented with a woman's testimony saying that she either promoted or was victimized by an objectifying culture or a neutral unrelated article, female participants associated sexually objectified female targets with uniquely human versus animal-related attributes. Results of Study 1 confirmed that, compared to the victim condition, female participants associated less humanness to sexually objectified female targets in both the promoter and the

Résumé

Des données récentes ont révélé que les femmes ont tendance à déshumaniser les autres femmes lorsque celles-ci sont objectivées sexuellement. Les études présentées dans cet article suggèrent que les femmes perçoivent celles-ci come promouvant une culture objectivante. Dans une première étude, nous présentions à des sujets féminins le témoignage d'une femme affirmant soit qu'elle promouvait, soit qu'elle était la victime d'une culture objectivante, ou encore un article neutre sans lien avec l'objectivation. Ensuite, les sujets étaient invitées à associer des cibles féminines objectivées avec des termes uniquement humains vs. liés aux animaux. Les résultats de

Key-words

Sexual objectification,
dehumanization,
gender, implicit
associations, victim,
promoter

Mots-clés

Objectivation sexuelle,
déshumanisation,
genre, associations
implicites, victime,
promoteur

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neutral condition. In Study 2, a moderated-mediation model confirmed that when the idea that all women are potential victims of objectification is activated, those women who include sexually objectified female targets in the overall gender category generalize their support for a female victim of objectification to these targets, and humanize them as a result. Overall, these results indicate that the meaning of the category of sexually objectified female targets (victims vs. promoters) is important in determining the human associations they will receive from other women.

cette étude confirment que, par rapport à la condition « victime », les sujets associaient une humanité moindre aux femmes objectivées sexuellement dans la condition « promoteur » et dans la condition « neutre ». Dans l'étude 2, un modèle de médiation modérée a confirmé que, lorsqu'on active l'idée selon laquelle toutes les femmes sont des victimes potentielles de l'objectivation, les femmes qui incluent les femmes objectivées sexuellement dans la catégorie de genre supra-ordonnée voient leur soutien pour une femme victime d'objectivation se généraliser à l'ensemble de ce groupe et, en conséquence, les humanisent. Globalement, ces résultats révèlent que la signification de la catégorie des cibles sexuellement objectivées (victimes vs. promoteurs) est importante pour déterminer dans quelle mesure elles seront humanisées par d'autres femmes.

Images of women in sexually provocative poses are often used in advertisements to sell a wide variety of consumer products as well as to promote healthy food or even organ donations in health promotion campaigns (e.g., Duval Guillaume campaign November 2008). Regardless of the content of the ads, the most popular image of women is one of a sex object (e.g., their sexuality is used to sell a product). Stankiewicz and Rosselli (2008), for example, conducted a content analysis on popular U.S. magazine advertisements and found that 51.80% of the ads that featured women portrayed them as sex objects. When focusing on women's fashion magazines only, the percentage even rises to 63.39%.

Construing a transgression as a moral or a value violation impacts other versus self-dehumanisation

Percevoir une transgression comme morale ou relative à des valeurs influence la déshumanisation de soi vs. d'autrui

Simone Tang*
Lasana Harris**

Abstract

What determines whether people dehumanise another person or themselves? We propose that the construal of a violation as moral or value-based influences who is dehumanised. Previous research has demonstrated that people perceive morals to be objective indicators of right and wrong (Goodwin & Darley, 2008), while values are viewed as subjective (Bardi & Schwartz, 2003). Here, participants recalled past moral or value violations, then reflected on the thoughts and feelings of either the other person victimised by their violation, or their own thoughts and feelings. Participants then rated dehumanisation of either the other or themselves using the Human Nature and

Résumé

Quels facteurs conduisent-ils les individus à déshumaniser autrui ou eux-mêmes ? Nous proposons qu'envisager une transgression comme de nature morale ou fondée sur des valeurs influence l'objet de la déshumanisation (soi vs. autrui). Des travaux antérieurs ont montré que les individus perçoivent la morale (*morals*) comme un indicateur objectif du bien et du mal (Goodwin & Darley, 2008), alors que les valeurs sont perçues comme subjectives (Schwartz, 2003). Dans la présente contribution, les participants étaient amenés à rappeler des transgressions morales ou de valeurs, et étaient ensuite amenés à se pencher soit sur les pensées et les sentiments de la victime, soit sur

Key-words

Dehumanization, objectification, morals, values, ethical behaviour, self-focus, other-focus

Mots-clés

Déshumanisation, objectivation, morale, valeurs, comportement éthique, focalisation sur soi, focalisation sur autrui

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Uniqueness Scale. We found that participants dehumanised the other more when recalling a value violation. This result suggests that differences in construal between morals and values can have an impact on dehumanisation.

leurs propres pensées et sentiments. Les participants évaluaient ensuite la déshumanisation soit d'autrui soit d'eux-mêmes sur la base de l'échelle de nature et d'unicité humaines. Nous avons constaté que les participants déshumanisaient autrui davantage lorsqu'ils se rappelaient d'une violation de *valeur*. Ce résultat suggère que les différences d'appréhension de la morale et des valeurs peuvent exercer un impact différent sur la déshumanisation.

"We march up, moody or good-tempered soldiers – we reach the zone where the front begins and become on the instant human animals."

"I did not want to kill you... But you were only an idea to me before, an abstraction that lived in my mind and called forth its appropriate response... I thought of your hand-grenades, of your bayonet, of your rifle."

REMARQUE (1929/2004, pp. 30, 117)

In *All Quiet on the Western Front* by Erich M. Remarque, Paul Baumer enlists in the German army during World War I, and is quickly consumed by the horrors of war. On the battlefield, as a way to make sense of the events, he learns to dehumanise himself and others as objects and animals. Dehumanisation has been investigated and described in different ways (Klein & Gervais, 2015), and the distinction between animal dehumanisation and objectification (Loughnan & Haslam, 2007) is but one approach employed in extant social psychological literature. Explicit ways include denying morality and justice to others (Opatow, 1990) and delegitimising others by casting them into extremely negative social categories (Bar-Tal, 1990). More subtle ways include inferring a lack of secondary emotions, such as nostalgia (Leyens, Demoulin, Vaes, Gaunt, & Paladino, 2007; Castano & Giner-Sorolla, 2006). Despite the range of definitions,

Exploring the role of culture in sexual objectification: A seven nations study

*Explorer le rôle de la culture dans l'objectivation sexuelle:
Une étude dans sept pays*

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Abstract

Sexual objectification – seeing or treating a person as a sexual object – has been the topic of considerable investigation. Building from a long-standing recognition of the potential importance of culture in sexual objectification, this paper focuses on the extent to which people in different parts of the world objectify themselves and others. We explored sexual objectification amongst 588 people in seven diverse nations (i.e., Australia,

Résumé

L'objectification sexuelle – la tendance à voir ou à traiter une personne comme un objet sexuel – a été l'objet de nombreuses études. Sur la base de l'importance recon- nue du facteur culturel dans le phénomène d'objectification, ce papier s'intéresse à la mesure dans laquelle les hommes et femmes de différentes régions du monde s'auto-objectivent et objectivent autrui. Nous avons exploré cette question auprès de 588 personnes

Key-words

Objectification, sexual objectification, self-objectification, culture, gender.

Mots-clés

Objectivation, objectivation sexuelle, auto-objectivation, culture, genre

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India, Italy, Japan, Pakistan, the UK, and the USA). Participants completed standard measures of self- and other-objectification. The results revealed that culture did affect self- and other-objectification, with objectification emerging more robustly in Australia, Italy, the UK, and the USA than it did in India, Japan, and Pakistan. These findings help support theoretical claims that culture matters for sexual objectification. Future research directions are discussed.

provenant de sept pays différents (i.e., Australie, Inde, Italie, Japon, Pakistan, Royaume-Uni et États-Unis). Les résultats révèlent que la culture influence l'auto-objectivation et l'objectivation d'autrui, avec davantage d'objectivation en Australie, Italie, Royaume-Uni et aux États-Unis en comparaison avec l'Inde, le Japon et le Pakistan. Ces résultats corroborent les théories soutenant que la culture est un facteur important lorsque l'on considère l'objectivation. Les pistes de recherche futures sont discutées.

As this special issue testifies, sexual objectification – viewing and treating a person as a sex object – is an important and growing topic of research. This research has explored both people's tendency to objectify the self (self-objectification) and others (other-objectification). Whereas much research focuses on the processes and consequences of objectification, here we turn our attention to the impact of culture.

Culture and objectification

In their foundational paper on sexual objectification, Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) began by observing that women's bodies are culturally constructed: *"Bodies exist within social and cultural contexts, and hence are also constructed through sociocultural practices and discourses"* (p. 174). This claim is made in part to distinguish their approach from biological approaches to gender and the body, and it lays the foundation upon which objectification theory and research was built. In acknowledging that the body is a sociocultural construct, Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) go on to caution that: *"Although our goal is to theorize about sexual objectification as it applies to all women, we recognize that much of the empirical literature that we use to buttress our theorizing has overlooked diversity among women, focusing*

Who treats people as sex objects? Cultural orientation, social comparison, and sexual objectification perpetration

Qui traite autrui comme un objet sexuel? Orientation culturelle, comparaison sociale, et objectivation sexuelle

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Abstract

The purpose of this investigation was to test a mediation model with cultural orientation, specifically vertical individualism (i.e., perceiving the self as an autonomous individual and accepting inequality) and social comparison predicting sexual objectification perpetration. The present work integrates literatures suggesting that objectification is primarily a Western phenomenon with theories suggesting that objectification results from local processing and power. Men and women completed measures of cultural orientation, social comparison orientation, and interpersonal sexual objectification perpetration including body evaluation and unwanted explicit sexual advances. Consistent with hypotheses, bivariate correlations and path analyses revealed that vertical individualism

Résumé

Le but de cette étude était de tester un modèle de médiation avec l'orientation culturelle, et plus spécifiquement l'individualisme vertical (la tendance à se percevoir comme un être autonome et acceptant l'inégalité) et la comparaison sociale comme prédicteurs de l'objectivation d'autrui. Cette étude intègre différentes littératures suggérant d'une part que l'objectivation est principalement un phénomène occidental et d'autre part que l'objectivation est liée à mode de traitement local et au pouvoir. Des hommes et des femmes ont complété des mesures d'orientation culturelle, de comparaison sociale et d'objectivation d'autrui, incluant l'évaluation du corps et les avances sexuelles non-désirées. Conformément aux hypothèses, les résultats révèlent que

Key-words

Objectification, culture, social comparison, objectifying gaze, local processing, power

Mots-clés

Objectivation, culture, comparaison sociale, regard objectivant, traitement local, pouvoir

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predicted social comparison orientation and sexual objectification perpetration, specifically body evaluation (e.g., objectifying gazes, appearance commentary). Further, social comparison emerged as a mediator of the relation between vertical individualism and sexual objectification perpetration. Interestingly, the same mediation model held for both men and women, and predicted body evaluation, but not unwanted sexual advances. Implications for cross- and within-cultural differences in objectification, predictors of objectification (e.g., culture, local processing, power), and interventions to prevent objectification are discussed.

l'individualisme vertical prédit la comparaison sociale et l'objectivation d'autrui, et plus spécifiquement l'évaluation du corps (p. ex., regards portés sur le corps, commentaires au sujet de l'apparence). De plus, la comparaison sociale apparaît comme un médiateur de la relation entre l'individualisme vertical et l'objectivation d'autrui. Il est intéressant de noter que le même modèle de médiation émerge pour les hommes et pour les femmes, et prédit l'évaluation du corps, mais pas les avances sexuelles non-désirées. Les implications pour les comparaisons inter- et intra-culturelles dans l'objectivation d'autrui, les prédicteurs de l'objectivation (p. ex., culture, mode de traitement local, et pouvoir), ainsi que les interventions de prévention sont discutées.

Sexual objectification – separating people's sexual body parts or functions from the entire person, reducing them to instruments, and regarding them as capable of representing the entire person (Bartky, 1990; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) – fundamentally changes how people see and treat other human beings. Seeing women as sex objects, for example, causes people to engage in more piecemeal processing of women's bodies (Bernard, Gervais, Allen, Campomizzi, & Klein, 2012), reducing them to their sexual body parts (Gervais, Vescio, Förster, Maass, & Suitner, 2012a; see also Bernard, Gervais, Allen, Campomizzi, & Klein, 2015), regarding them as interchangeable with other women (Cikara, Eberhardt, & Fiske, 2010; Gervais, Vescio, & Allen, 2012b) and attributing them less mind and moral agency (Loughnan et al., 2010).

Instrumentality and the denial of personhood: The social psychology of objectifying others

*Instrumentalité et déni de la personne:
la psychologie sociale de l'objectivation d'autrui*

Jessica M. LaCroix*

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Abstract

Although recent social psychological objectification research has focused on men sexually objectifying women, there are numerous other domains and methods by which people treat others as objects. This paper incorporates Nussbaum's (1995) delineation of seven ways to objectify a person with Holland and Haslam's (2013) conceptualization of objectification as treating another person as a thing and denying the other's personhood. Four of the methods of objectification that Nussbaum (1995) describes – instrumentalization, fungibility, violability, and ownership – amount to treating another person as a thing, whereas the other three – denial of autonomy, of agency, and of subjective experience – are means of denying

Résumé

Bien que la recherche récente sur l'objectivation en psychologie sociale se soit concentrée sur l'objectivation sexuelle des femmes de la part des hommes, il existe de nombreux autres contextes dans lesquels les individus traitent autrui comme un objet ainsi que de manières d'objectiver autrui. Cet article intègre la taxonomie de Nussbaum (1995), qui décrit sept façons d'objectiver une personne avec la conceptualisation d'Holland et Haslam (2013) de l'objectivation selon lesquels celle-ci correspond au fait de traiter autrui comme une chose et de lui nier le statut de personne. Quatre des méthodes décrites par Nussbaum (1995) – instrumentalisation, fongibilité, violabilité, et propriété – correspondent au fait de traiter autrui

Key-words

Objectification,
instrumentality,
dehumanization

Mots-clés

Objectivation,
instrumentalité,
déshumanisation

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personhood. We review social psychological research that pertains to each of these seven means of objectification and show that objectification is distinguishable from closely related social psychological phenomena to the extent that 1) agents treat others as instrumental tools to achieve their own ends, and 2) agents deny others at least one aspect of personhood. This review not only includes research on interpersonal treatment, but intergroup treatment and institutional treatment as well.

comme une chose, alors que les trois autres – déni d'autonomie, d'agentivité, et d'expérience subjective, sont des façons de nier le statut de personne. Nous passons en revue la recherche en psychologie sociale qui se réfère à chacune de ces sept façons d'objectiver et montrons que l'objectivation est distincte de phénomènes connexes dans la mesure où les agents traitent autrui comme des outils visant à atteindre leurs propres fins, et où les agents nient à autrui au moins un aspect de leur personne. Cette revue ne se cantonne pas à la recherche sur les relations interpersonnelles, mais envisage également les relations intergroupes et les institutions.

In studying objectification, social psychology has generally focused on sexual objectification and its consequences for women (e.g., self-objectification, Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Objectification, however, is a much broader phenomenon (Nussbaum, 1995), and because it is about relationships, social psychology can help clarify its conceptualization. At this stage, objectification is due a more thorough conceptualization; we will explore whether objectification has any fundamental properties, how it is distinct from other biases (e.g., stereotyping, dehumanization), and identify areas for future research.

At the outset, we acknowledge that to many people, the term “objectification” implies something objectionable. Treating people as objects can be morally problematic and can contribute to inequality, although the consequences of objectification depend on context (Nussbaum, 1995). Social philosopher Nussbaum specifies seven ways to treat a person as a thing, including treating others as instrumental, fungible, violable, and