

**CHASING THE MUSCULAR IDEAL: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE
INTERNALISATION OF MEDIA IDEALS AND THE DRIVE FOR
MUSCULARITY**

By

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Declaration

I declare that the mini-dissertation hereby submitted to the University of Pretoria, for the degree of Masters in Clinical Psychology, has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other university; that it is my work in design and in execution, and that all material contained herein has been duly acknowledged

Initial

Date

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Trevor and Ramona du Plessis.

“Without the inspiration, drive and support that you have given me, I might not be the person I am today.”

Acknowledgements

The pursuit of a masters degree in clinical psychology has proven to be one of the most challenging tasks of my life. There were times that I felt it was an impossible task. The assistance that my supervisor Professor M. Makhubela provided has been vitally important. Words cannot describe how grateful I am for the constant assistance he has provided.

Dr N. Rawatlal, your support and guidance as a therapy supervisor has proved invaluable to my development as a clinical psychologist. I will always remember your kindness and I am eternally thankful for it.

Abstract

Background: Although self-objectification theory has been applied to men, it has yielded mixed results. Self-objectification is linked to a range of negative psychological outcomes including body esteem problems.

Objective: The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between the internalisation of media ideals, self-objectification, body surveillance, body shame and the drive for muscularity in South African adult men and to determine if self-objectification mediates the association between the internalisation of media ideals and the drive for muscularity.

Participants and Settings: The participants included 227 adult men between 18 and 63 years of age (Mean age = 35.38; SD = 13.60). The participants completed questionnaires to assess their the internalisation of media ideals, body shame, body surveillance and drive for muscularity.

Methods: Zero-order correlation analysis was computed to examine the association between the internalisation of media ideals, self-objectification, body surveillance, body shame and the drive for muscularity. In addition, linear regression analysis was performed to examine the self-objectification mediated association between the internalisation of media ideals and the drive for muscularity.

Results: The results revealed that the participants' internalisation of media ideals was significantly associated with their self-objectification, body surveillance and the drive for muscularity but not body shame. Self-objectification partially mediated the relationship between the internalisation of media ideals and drive for muscularity.

Conclusions: This study has demonstrated initial evidence that objectification theory is an appropriate theoretical lens that can be employed to explain the drive for muscularity and body image concerns in South African men.

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Chapter 1: Overview of the study

1. General introduction

1.1 Introduction

Objectification theory (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997) has provided a social constructionist lens of the female body by positing that in Western societies the female body is socially constructed as an object to be looked at, evaluated and used for the advantage of others (Gattino, De Piccoli, Fedi, Boza, & Rollero, 2018). The objectification women experience may be internalised and leads them to view themselves as objects to be used by others; in other words, they self-objectify. Self-objectification is linked to a range of negative psychological outcomes such as increased self-consciousness, body surveillance, body shame, body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, low body esteem, depressed mood, and restrictive and disordered eating patterns (Daniel & Bridges, 2010).

The media has been identified as a source for objectifying content (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Media influences play a major role in a culture that sexualises and objectifies women. Objectification theory has been successfully applied to female body image concerns by linking the internalisation of media standards, sexual objectification and self-objectification to body image concerns (Daniel & Bridges, 2010). However, men are also portrayed in the media in objectifying and sexualising ways (Pope, Phillips, & Olivardia, 2000). Objectification theory has also recently been applied to men (Daniel & Bridges, 2010), and provides a lens to assess the effects of this increased sexualisation of men in the media and how it relates to the drive for muscularity in men.

1.2. Statement of problem

As noted previously, self-objectification is associated with increased self-consciousness, body surveillance, body shame, body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, low body esteem, depressed mood, and restrictive and disordered eating patterns (Daniel & Bridges, 2010). Furthermore, there has been an

increase in images of sexualised men in the media. Research has shown that men internalise these images, which may subsequently lead to body image concerns in men (Aubrey, 2006). Mchiza et al. (2015) conducted a survey of 6 411 South Africans (15+ years; 2 246 males) and found that 84.5% of the respondents had a largely distorted body image and 45.3% were highly dissatisfied with their body size.

Hitzeroth, Wessels, Zungu-Dirwayi, Oosthuizen and Stein (2001) revealed that 53.6% of a sample of 28 amateur body builders suffered from muscle dysmorphia. The latter were significantly more likely to have comorbid body dysmorphic disorder based on preoccupations other than muscularity. To my knowledge (based on my literature review), research on body image concerns in men in a South African context is limited. Mchiza et al. (2015) and Hitzeroth et al.(2005) studies did not assess the same variables as the present study; however, they have provided evidence that suggests that South African males may display body dissatisfaction and have distorted body images. In the present study, body image concerns amongst men in South Africa were explored.

1.3. Aim of the study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the utility of self-objectification theory to explain body image concerns in men in South Africa and to explore media influences on the male body image and desire for muscularity.

1.4. Objectives of the study

The following objectives were formulated to answer the research questions:

- 1.4.1 To examine the relationship between the internalisation of media ideals, self-objectification, body surveillance, body shame and the drive for muscularity in adult South African men; and

1.4.2 To determine if self-objectification mediates the association between the internalisation of media ideals and the drive for muscularity.

1.5. Research questions

The present study sought to apply self-objectification theory to examine body image concerns amongst men in South Africa and explore media influences, namely, the internalisation of media ideals on the male body image and male drive for muscularity. The following research questions were explored:

1.5.1 What is the relationship between the internalisation of media ideals, self-objectification, body surveillance, body shame and the drive for muscularity in South African adult men?

1.5.2 Does self-objectification mediate the association between the internalisation of media ideals and the drive for muscularity?

1.6. Significance of the study

Western culture is widespread and has a significant influence on South African society. The literature that has addressed body image concerns has focused predominantly on women and very little on men (Daniel & Bridges, 2010; Hallsworth, Wade, & Tiggemann, 2005). The main reason for the scarcity of such studies on men is that there has been a belief that they are at no or little risk of suffering problems related to their body image (Daniel & Bridges, 2010). However, with the change in media images, researchers have rejected the notion that men are at little or no risk of experiencing problems related to body image (Daniel & Bridges, 2010; Jonason, Krucmar, & Sohn, 2012).

There have been concerted efforts to define, measure and develop theories that capture the male experience of body image and attempt to explain the recent increase in male body image disturbances (Daniel & Bridges, 2010). Objectification theory presents an avenue to explore body images in men. The

increase of sexualised images of men in the media has made objectification theory relevant to men. To my knowledge, no research has attempted to explain the relationship between the internalisation of media ideals, self-objectification, body surveillance, body shame and the drive for muscularity in South African adult men. The research will also contribute to theory, policy, practice and methodology.

1.7. Operational definition of terms

1.7.1 Self-objectification

The viewing of one's body in terms of appearance only and not in terms of its functions (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

1.7.2 Body image

Croll (2005) defined body image as the "dynamic perception of one's body – how it looks, feels, and moves. It is shaped by perception, emotions, physical sensations, and is not static, but can change in relation to mood, physical experience, and environment" (p.155).

1.7.3 Internalisation of media ideals

Internalisation refers to the degree to which an individual *buys into* socially prescribed appearance ideals, expresses a desire to attain the appearance ideal and engages in behaviours aimed at meeting those ideals (Thompson & Stice, 2001).

1.7.4 Mesomorphic ideal

The dominant appearance ideal for men, which is termed the *muscular-ideal*, refers to a figure that is lean, but muscular and athletic, with well-developed and defined upper body muscles, a v-shaped torso, and a slim waist and hips (Ridgeway & Tylka, 2005; Thompson & Cafri, 2007).

1.7.5 *Muscularity*

In this study, muscularity is defined as the size, definition and firmness of one's body compared to the average person (Calzo, Corliss, Blood, Field & Austin, 2013).

1.7.6 *Body surveillance*

Body surveillance or monitoring can be described as a self-consciousness that manifests itself as a preoccupation with one's appearance (Martins, Tiggemann, & Kirkbride, 2007).

1.7.7 *Body shame*

Body shame is the disparity that is seen when one compares their body to ideal bodies in their culture (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

1.8. Conclusion

In this chapter, objectification theory was introduced. Furthermore, it was revealed that although it is applicable to men, studies have yielded mixed results. The problem statement, aim of the study, objectives of the study and the research questions were outlined in relation to previous literature and empirical evidence. The significance of the current study was discussed in relation to previous literature and empirical evidence. Finally, the definition of terms employed in this study were provided.

Chapter 2: Theoretical perspective and literature review

2. Introduction

In this chapter, the theoretical perspective of the study is discussed. Furthermore, the study is situated within the extant literature and empirical evidence pertaining to self-objectification in men.

2.1. Theoretical perspective: Objectification theory

Frederickson and Roberts (1997) employed Bartky's (1990) definition of sexual objectification to develop objectification theory. Bartky (1990) defined sexual objectification as the separation of one's body, body parts and sexual functions from one's identity, which reduces the person to the status of an object. Objectification theory has posited that western culture socialises girls and women to view themselves as objects to be evaluated, specifically their appearance rather than their personhood because their bodies are constantly subjected to other people's views (Fredrickson, Roberts, Noll, Quinn, & Twenge, 1998).

Westernised culture socialises girls and women to internalise these gazes and evaluations of their bodies; thus, reducing them to objects. This may result in an increased preoccupation with their own physical appearance, which is referred to as self-objectification (Daniel & Bridges, 2010). Engaging in self-objectification exhibits a self-consciousness that manifests itself as a preoccupation with one's appearance (Martins et al., 2007). This process is known as body surveillance and is the defining characteristic of self-objectification. Self-objectification, body surveillance and body shame constitute the three aspects of objectification theory (Daniel & Bridges, 2010).

Despite the fact that objectification theory was developed to explain female body image concerns, other researchers have suggested that it is applicable to male body image concerns as well (Hebl, King, & Lin, 2004; Martins et al., 2007; Morrison, Morrison, & Hopkins, 2003; Morry & Staska, 2001; Strelan & Hargreaves, 2005). Although men may not necessarily experience evaluation by women to the same degree that women experience evaluation by men, they are subjected to the same overarching cultural system and ideals perpetuated by the media that have been revealed to be significant in the literature on objectification and body image concerns of both genders (Morrison et al., 2003).

2.2 Literature review

Historically, body image concerns were thought to impact women only. Furthermore, objectification theory was developed to describe the experience of women in western societies. However, several studies have provided support for the applicability of objectification theory to men. Morgan (2002) found that men experienced body image concerns. Leone, Sedory and Gray (2005) showed that some men developed body dystopic disorder (BDD), which subsequently became known as *bigorexia*. It describes the phenomenon of becoming bigger by gaining muscle mass (Leone et al., 2005).

Media influences have been identified as a cause of body image disturbances in both men and women. A significant amount of research has demonstrated the relationship between viewing objectified media models and self-objectification in both men and women (Rollero, 2015; Vandenbosch & Eggermont 2014). Internalising objectifying messages in the media causes individuals to self-objectify (Karazsia, van Dulmen, Wong, & Crowther, 2013; Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2012). An increase in disordered eating in the remote areas of Ukraine and Fiji was revealed to be related to the introduction of Western mass media in the areas (Gattino et al., 2018). An increase in body dissatisfaction and eating disorders has also been noted in the populations of developing countries as they become more urban, modern, and global (Nasser, 2006). These findings have demonstrated the media's power and influence.

However, it is noteworthy that while Frederickson and Roberts' (1997) objectification theory has been successfully applied to female body image concerns (Daniel & Bridges, 2010), it has produced varied results when employed to explain body image concerns in men (Calogero 2009; Rollero & De Piccoli, 2015).

2.2.1 *Media Influences and self-objectification*

Modern societies have increasingly focused on male bodies (Martins et al., 2007). Researchers have suggested that advertisements targeting men have become more objectifying over time (Ricciardelli et al., 2010). Contemporary studies, which have examined the changing value of the male figure in modern societies, have illustrated that the overall number of objectifying portrayals of men in the media has risen dramatically in recent years (Martins et al., 2007). Portrayals of unclothed men in appropriate situations such as the beach have changed to present-day portrayals where the bare male body is used as a marketing tool to sell unrelated products, much like the female body (Martins et al., 2007). Furthermore, the increase in the use of male bodies in advertisements has coincided with a change in the shape of the body portrayed (Martins et al., 2007). In modern societies, a mesomorphic male body is the prevailing ideal (Martins et al., 2007). The mesomorphic figure is lean, muscular and athletic, with well-developed and defined upper body muscles, a v-shaped torso, and a slim waist and hips (Ridgeway & Tylka, 2005; Thompson & Cafri, 2007). Moreover, this ideal physique is desired more for aesthetic than functional purposes (Daniel & Bridges, 2010).

Analysis of popular magazines during the last 30 years has documented an increase in the frequency of images showing semi-naked men (Strother, Lemberg, Stanford & Turberville, 2012). Advertisements often portray men as sexual objects (Strother et al., 2012). Children's toys and action figures have become even more muscular (Martins et al., 2007; Woolridge, 2012). These action figures exhibit a mesomorphic ideal, which is beyond the realms of

human attainment (Olivardia, Pope, Borowiecki, & Cohane, 2004; Strother et al., 2012). Research on the female body image has implicated the role of the media in defining and perpetuating feminine ideals (Grabe, 2008). The same is true for men (Daniel & Bridges, 2010). The media's representation of ideal male and female bodies has increasingly restricted itself to certain body types over time (Boroughs, Cafri, & Thompson, 2005). Other studies have also revealed this trend (Frith & Gleeson, 2004; Grieve, Newton, Kelley, Miller, & Kerr, 2005; Leit, Gray, & Pope, 2002; Lorenzen, Grieve, & Thomas, 2004; Morrison, Morrison, & Hopkins, 2003; Ridgeway & Tylka, 2005).

Strother et al. (2012) revealed that the average male model has lost 5.44 kilograms of fat while gaining roughly 12.25 kilograms of muscle, between 1977 and 2002. The drive for muscularity, that is, the size, definition and firmness of one's body compared to that of the average person has been found to be associated with poor self-esteem and a higher level of depression (Hallsworth et al., 2005). Men have started experiencing the current muscular ideal of the male body as less realistic, which may have had an influence on increased male body dissatisfaction and use of excessive exercise and steroids (Strother et al., 2012). Aubrey (2006) found that exposure to sexually objectifying television shows and magazines increased body surveillance in men, but not in women. Body surveillance is a self-consciousness that manifests itself as a preoccupation with one's appearance (Martins et al., 2007). Although findings have not always been consistent, the internalisation of media ideals has generally been demonstrated to be a strong predictor of body image concerns in men (Daniel & Bridges, 2010; De Jesus et al., 2015; Edwards, Tod, Molnor, & Markland, 2016). As noted previously, Croll (2005) stated that body image is the "dynamic perception of one's body – how it looks, feels, and moves. It is shaped by perception, emotions, physical sensations, and is not static, but can change in relation to mood, physical experience, and environment" (p.155).

Daniel and Bridges (2010) could not confirm the role of objectification in the relationship between the internalisation of media ideals and the drive for muscularity. Differences in methodology, specifically, objectification measures across studies has been implicated as the reason for this mixed result.

Employing the Self-Objectification Questionnaire (SOQ; Noll & Fredrickson, 1998) with men, a scale developed for use with women, was identified as a possible reason for the results not matching the hypothesis. Therefore, the present study aimed to correct some of the limitations of previous studies and utilise a male-specific objectification measure (Male Assessment of Self-Objectification; Daniel, Bridges, & Martens, 2014).

2.2.2 *Self-objectification, body surveillance, body shame and the drive for muscularity*

Varied results have been revealed when objectification theory has been applied to body image concerns and related concepts in men (Daniel & Bridges, 2010). Martins et al. (2007) found that homosexual men reported higher levels of body shame than heterosexual men. Body shame is the disparity that occurs when one compares their body to the ideal bodies in their culture (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Martin et al. also revealed that homosexual men reported higher levels of body surveillance and body dissatisfaction than heterosexual men. However, homosexual and heterosexual men reported similar levels of drive for muscularity. Similarly, Oehlhof, Musher-Eizenman, Neufeld and Hauser (2009) examined the relationship between self-objectification and ideal body shape in men and women and found that men desired a more muscular body. Self-objectification is related to viewing one's body in relation to appearance only and not in relation to the body's functions (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Oehlhof et al. further suggested that both self-objectification and gender are related to an individual's ideal body shape. In other words, as the focus on a muscular ideal for men increases, they may experience dual pressure to be both thin and muscular. For men, an emphasis on appearance over performance goals for one's body is linked to a desire to be more muscular.

Daniel and Bridges (2010) as well as Parent and Moradi (2011) investigated the drive for muscularity in men by employing objectification theory. The results of both studies revealed that body surveillance, body shame and the internalisation of media ideals were associated significantly and positively with each other. However, body surveillance and body shame failed to mediate the

relationship between the internalisation of media ideals and the drive for muscularity in men (Daniel & Bridges, 2010; Parent & Moradi, 2011). Brewster, Sandil, DeBlaere, Breslow and Eklund (2017), with a sample of sexual minority men, produced results that were consistent with previous studies conducted by Daniel and Bridges (2010) and Parent and Moradi (2011). Brewster et al. found that the internalisation of media ideals was directly related to higher levels of body surveillance, body shame and the drive for muscularity. Contrary to their hypothesis, Brewster et al. (2017) showed that body surveillance was not directly related to the drive for muscularity. Likewise, Linder and Daniels (2018) found that heterosexual men were more likely to describe themselves in self-objectifying ways and less likely to use physicality self-descriptors. Linder and Daniels also found that heterosexual men were more likely to describe themselves using physicality self-descriptors when viewing performance-based images of same sex athletes.

Davids, Watson and Gere (2019) hypothesized that sexual objectification experiences were directly related to internalised sociocultural standards of appearance, self-objectification, body surveillance and drive for muscularity. They also predicted that self-objectification could significantly positively predict body surveillance, body shame and the drive for muscularity; body surveillance could predict body shame and the drive for muscularity; and body shame could predict the drive for muscularity. The results of their study demonstrated that sexual objectification was significantly positively related to the internalisation of cultural standards of appearance, body shame and the drive for muscularity. However, the effect sizes of these correlations were small. The significant positive correlation demonstrates that sexually objectifying experiences may have direct and damaging effects on a man's body image by prompting a drive for muscularity (Davids et al., 2019).

Heath, Tod, Kannis-Dymand and Lovell (2016) examined objectification theory and muscle dysphoria in 257 men in Australia. They found that the internalisation of cultural standards of appearance, that is, the muscular ideal had a positive medium relationship with self-objectification, body surveillance and muscular dissatisfaction. Self-objectification had a positive medium

relationship with body surveillance. In the same study, Heath et al. showed that self-objectification significantly mediated the link between the internalisation of cultural standards of appearance and body surveillance while body surveillance significantly mediated the relations between self-objectification and muscle dissatisfaction. Their study was limited in that the participants were recruited from gyms and bodybuilding forums, and referred to the study by other participants who presumably emphasized fitness.

The literature and empirical evidence discussed have demonstrated a positive relationship between self-objectification, body surveillance, body shame and the drive for muscularity. Although evidence for the applicability of objectification theory applied to men has been provided, studies have also yielded mixed results when applying objectification theory to men.

Michaels, Parent and Moradi (2013) hypothesized that viewing muscularity-idealising media images would produce negative body image in sexual minority men. The results were contrary to the hypothesis in that the participants who viewed muscularity-idealising images did not report a greater drive for muscularity or higher levels of body surveillance and body dissatisfaction. Similarly, Gervais, Vescio and Allen (2011) examined the effects of objectifying gaze on math performance, interaction motivation, body surveillance, body shame and body dissatisfaction on both men and women. The variables of math performance and interaction motivation are not applicable to the present study. Therefore, only the results relating to body surveillance and body shame are discussed further. Gervais et al.'s (2011) conducted an experiment where men and women would receive an objectifying gaze from a person who was of the opposite sex. The person who was of the opposite sex was a trained confederate. The results of the study showed that the objectifying gaze did not influence body surveillance or body shame for women or men. Studies that have specifically examined ethnic differences in the drive for muscularity have also produced mixed results (Grammas & Schwartz, 2009; Swami, 2016). The empirical studies discussed demonstrate that objectification theory has produced mixed results when applied to men.

2.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, empirical literature pertaining to the relationship between the internalisation of media ideals and self-objectification as well the relationship between self-objectification, body surveillance, body shame and the drive for muscularity was reviewed. The literature highlighted that when men internalise the mesomorphic ideal, they display higher levels of self-objectification, which has shown a positive association with body shame, body surveillance and a drive for muscularity. This implies that objectification theory can be applied to men and it can be used to explain body image disturbances in men despite the mixed results it has yielded.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3. Introduction

In this chapter, the research design and procedures of the present study are described.

3.1 Research design

A quantitative methodology with a correlational research design was employed. Correlational studies are quantitative designs in which the relationship between two or more quantitative variables from the same group of participants is examined (Babbie & Mouton, 2014).

3.2 Participants

Convenience sampling and snowball sampling, which are non-probability sampling methods, were utilised to recruit 227 adult male participants (18 years and older). In convenience sampling, participants are chosen based on their proximity and accessibility to the researcher. Subsequently, participants that had already been involved in the study were asked to recruit and refer the researcher to other potential participants that qualified for the study; this is referred to as snowball sampling (Babbie & Mouton, 2014). A sample of 227 is large enough to ensure statistical power of the analyses (cf., Hatcher, 2013). While the chosen sampling methods have various benefits such as requiring fewer resources, their inherent limitations are obvious including sampling bias. However, research has demonstrated that although estimations based on a convenience sample, gym members in this study, is biased, relations and changes in variables over time in this convenient population reflect the changes and relations in the general population (Hedt & Pagano, 2011).

3.3 Research instruments

3.3.1 *The internalisation of media ideals*

The sociocultural attitudes towards appearance questionnaire-4-revised (SATAQ-4) (Schaefer et al., 2015) is a 22-item scale that comprises five subscales: The internalization of the thin\low body fat ideal, the internalization of the muscular athletic ideal (mesomorphic ideal) and societal pressures from family, peers and media. Internalisation is the degree to which an individual recognises, accepts and internalises sociocultural appearance standards, that is, the internalisation of the mesomorphic ideal. The SATAQ-4 is scored on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree). In previous research, SATAQ-4 scores have demonstrated excellent reliability (alpha = .84 or higher) and good convergent validity with measures of body image, eating disturbance and self-esteem (Schaefer, Harriger, Heinberg, Soderberg, & Thompson, 2017). Although the participants completed the entire SATAQ-4, only the items, which were related to the internalisation of the muscular\athletic ideal and pressures from the media, were employed in the present study.

3.3.2 *Male Assessment of Self-Objectification (MASO)*

The 20-item MASO assesses the experience of self-objectification, specifically in men (Daniel et al., 2014). Thirteen items are appearance-based and seven are competency-based. The self-objectification score is determined by subtracting the mean score of the competency-based items from the mean score of the appearance-based items. The overall internal consistency for the MASO has been demonstrated to be .90 (Daniel et al., 2014).

3.3.3 *Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (OBCS)*

The OBCS (McKinley & Hyde, 1996) is a 24-item scale that comprises three subscales. Only two subscales of the OBCS were utilised to measure body

surveillance and body shame. Each subscale has eight items and is scored on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). Moradi and Varne (2017) demonstrated internal consistency for the original and abbreviated forms of the OBCS body surveillance and body shame subscales.

3.3.4 *Drive for Muscularity Scale (DMS)*

The DMS is a 15-item measure of attitudes and behaviours that are linked to satisfaction with one's muscular appearance. It is scored on a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree) (McCreary & Sasse, 2000). The subscale and total scores can be derived by either averaging or summing the item responses, after reverse-scoring them. Reliability coefficients of the scale were found to be $\geq .84$ (McCreary, Sasse, Saucier, & Dorsch, 2004).

3.4 Procedure

Permission to approach gym members to participate in the study was obtained from a gym in Pretoria. Once the permission was obtained, possible participants were approached at the gym. The researcher sat in the waiting area of the gym. Gym members who were also sitting in the waiting area were approached and other gym members were approached while they were making their way in and out of the gym. As noted previously, the participants were asked to identify other potential participants who they thought would be interested in participating in the study and matched the sample criteria. Participation was voluntary and based on willingness to participate. Subsequently, each participant was required to sign a consent form in which the study was outlined and the participant's anonymity and the confidentiality of the study were assured.

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Research and Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Pretoria. The survey involved participants completing a self-report questionnaire that consisted of multiple measures and took approximately 20 minutes to complete. Letters of invitation

and the aforementioned questionnaires were distributed to the respondents. Each participant signed an informed consent form. The purpose of the study was explained in an open invitation letter and participants' information sheet. The researcher also verbally explained the study to participants who had the time while others read the invitation letter and information sheet in their own time.

Some participants completed the consent form and the questionnaire at the gym when they were approached. Other members took forms and returned them to gym the next day. The researcher informed all potential participants that he would be present at the gym during certain hours on certain days as this was part of the agreement between the researcher and the gym.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

The participants signed an informed consent form before taking part in the study. Involvement in this study was voluntary. The participants' anonymity and confidentiality were ensured because no identifying data were collected. There were no expected risks and discomforts anticipated by participating in the study. The participants could choose to withdraw from the study at any time during the study without any consequences or offering any explanation. Any participant who experienced some distress as a result of completing the questionnaire was referred to Itsoseng Clinic for debriefing. No form of remuneration was offered for participation in the study. The raw data will be securely stored (i.e., HSB 11-23) for reuse and archiving for a minimum period of 15 years. Other researchers will also have access to the data.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, the research design and procedures undertaken to conduct the study were outlined.

Chapter 4: Results

4. Introduction

In this chapter, the results of the study and interpretation thereof are explained.

4.1. Data analysis strategy

The data were analysed by employing SPSS 25.0. A preliminary analysis was performed to determine and describe the characteristics of the sample, for example, the normality of the distribution of the study variables as well as the descriptive statistics of the participants' demographic characteristics. In addition, a zero-order correlation analysis was computed to examine the association between the internalisation of media ideals, self-objectification, body surveillance, body shame and the drive for muscularity. Linear regression analysis was performed to examine the self-objectification mediated association between the internalisation of media ideals and the drive for muscularity (Baron & Kenny, 1986). The mediation analysis was tested using a special *PROCESS* developed by Andrew F. Hayes. Both the Sobel test and bootstrapping were employed to evaluate the significance of the mediating effects (Sobel, 1982).

4.2. Presentation of results

4.2.1 *Descriptive data.*

The participants included 227 adults between 18 and 63 years of age (Mean age = 35.38; SD = 13.60). As presented in Table 1, 60.8% of the participants classified themselves as Black, 16.7 % as White, 7.5 % as Asian and 15.0 % as Coloured.

Table 1:
Sample demographics

		Frequency	Percentage
Ages	18-20 years	92	42%
	29-39 years	48	21%
	40-51 years	44	19%
	52-63 years	42	18%
Race	Black	138	60.8 %
	Coloured	34	15.0 %
	White	38	16.7 %
	Asian	17	7.5 %

4.2.2 *Data quality and reliability coefficients of the research instruments.*

The normality of distribution of the data and psychometric properties of the scales were tested. The results revealed that the skewness and kurtosis for each of the individual scales were within limits. All the scales used in the study had acceptable reliability estimates (see Table 2).

Table 2:**Normality, mean and Cronbach's alphas of the research instruments**

	Skewness	Kurtosis	Mean	SD	α	Items
1. Internalisation of media ideals	2.344(0.162)	17.210(0.322)	10.585	5.392	.617	4
2. Self-objectification	- 0.309(0.162)	1.644(0.322)	23.940	11.137	.810	20
3. Body surveillance	0.204(0.163)	- 0.195(0.324)	30.102	7.590	.656	8
4. Body shame	0.238(0.162)	- 0.310(0.322)	28.092	8.887	.752	8
5. Drive for muscularity	0.663(0.163)	- 0.172(0.324)	38.866	15.688	.905	15

Note: α = Cronbach's Alpha

4.2.3 Association between the internalisation of media ideals, self-objectification, body surveillance, body shame and the drive for muscularity.

The results of the associations between the study variables are displayed in Table 3. The results suggest that the participants' internalisation of media ideals was significantly associated with their self-objectification, body shame and drive for muscularity, but not body surveillance. Specifically, the results showed that the variables had positive and small to moderate associations between each other.

Table 3:

Intercorrelations between the study variables

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Internalisation of media ideals	1				
2. Self-objectification	.254**	1			
3. Body surveillance	.037	.129	1		
4. Body shame	.270**	.228**	.294**	1	
5. Drive for muscularity	.212**	.271**	.367**	.106	1

Note: ** $p < 0.01$

4.2.4 *Self-objectification mediated association between the internalisation of media ideals and the drive for muscularity*

In Step 1 of the mediation model, the regression of the internalisation of media ideals on drive to muscularity without the mediator was significant, $b = 0.613$, $t(222) = 3.232$, $p = .001$. Step 2 showed that the regression of the internalisation of media ideals on the mediator, self-objectification was also significant, $b = 0.524$, $t(222) = 3.910$, $p = .000$. Step 3 of the mediation process revealed that the mediator, self-objectification controlling for the internalisation of media ideals was significant, $b = 0.324$, $t(221) = 3.503$, $p = .000$. Step 4 of the analyses revealed that controlling for the mediator, self-objectification, the internalisation of media ideals was a significant predictor of drive for muscularity, $b = 0.443$, $t(221) = 2.315$, $p = .021$. The results suggest that self-objectification partially mediated the relationship between the internalisation of media ideals and drive for muscularity ($Z = 2.49$, $p = .012$; effect size = 0.170, with a 95% CI [0.049; 0.384]).

4.3 **Conclusion**

In this chapter, the results of the current study are presented. The results revealed that the participants' internalisation of media ideals was significantly associated with their self-objectification, body shame and drive for muscularity, but not body surveillance. Furthermore, self-objectification only partially mediated the relationship between the internalisation of media ideals and the drive for muscularity.

Chapter 5: Discussion, recommendations and limitations of the study

5. Introduction

In this chapter, the results of the current study are discussed in relation to the existing literature. Furthermore, the implications of the results as well as the recommendations and limitations of the current study are considered.

5.1 Discussion

5.1.1 *Association between the internalisation of media ideals, self-objectification, body surveillance, body shame and the drive for muscularity*

The results of this study revealed that the participants' internalisation of media ideals was significantly associated with their self-objectification, body shame and the drive for muscularity, but not body surveillance. The finding of a significant association between the internalisation of media ideals and self-objectification concurs with previous empirical research (Brewster et al., 2017; Daniel & Bridges, 2010; Davids et al., 2019; Heath et al., 2016; Karazsia et al., 2013; Linder & Daniels, 2018; Parent & Moradi, 2011; Rollero, 2015; Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2012; Vandenbosch & Eggermont 2014). While these studies were conducted primarily in Western contexts, research in developing countries has also shown that the media has negative effects on body image (Gattino et al., 2018; Nasser, 2006). Considering that there has been a consistent increase in objectifying images of the mesomorphic ideal in the media, the results of the current study are expected.

Aubrey (2006) found that exposure to sexually objectifying television shows and magazines increased body surveillance in men. Heath et al. (2016) revealed self-

objectification had a positive and medium association with body surveillance. However, the results of the present study do not concur with previous findings because no association between the two variables was found. However, this finding is consistent with studies that demonstrated that muscularity-idealising images and objectifying gazes did not influence body surveillance (Gervais et al., 2011; Parent & Moradi, 2013). This result is not unsubstantiated because objectification theory has yielded mixed results when applied to men.

The current study also revealed that the internalisation of media ideals had a significant association with the drive for muscularity and body shame. These results are in accordance with previous empirical studies (Cramblitt & Pritchard, 2013; Daniel & Bridges, 2010; Davids et al., 2019; De Jesus et al., 2015; Edwards et al., 2016; Karazsia & Crowther, 2009; Oeholf et al., 2009; Parent & Moradi, 2011; Pritchard & Campbell, 2014). The findings of the present study have provided initial evidence that South African men are at risk of developing a range of negative psychological outcomes such as increased self-consciousness, body shame, body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, low body esteem, depressed mood, and restrictive and disordered eating patterns as a result of self-objectification and internalising sexualised media. Although this was an exploratory study, the results reveal that objectification theory can be applied to men in South Africa. However, further research on this topic is recommended because this is the first study of its kind in a South African context.

5.1.2. *Self-objectification mediated association between the internalisation of media ideals and the drive for muscularity*

The role of media influences and objectification theory in relation to male body image concerns was also examined in this study. Prior research using causal models to explain female body image concerns has implicated the mediating role

of objectification in this relationship (Calogero, Pina, Park, & Rahemtulla, 2010; Moradi et al., 2005). The results of the current study showed that self-objectification partially mediated the relationship between the internalisation of media ideals and drive for muscularity. To my knowledge, the study conducted by Daniel and Bridges (2010) is the only study that has specifically examined the mediating effect of self-objectification between the internalisation of media ideals and the drive for muscularity. However, they were unable to confirm the role of objectification in the relationship between the internalisation of media ideals and the drive for muscularity. The measure for objectification they employed may explain this. The MASO was employed in this study to address this limitation (Daniel, et al., 2014).

Dauids et al. (2019) examined if sexual objectification mediated the relationship between the internalisation of cultural standards and the drive for muscularity. The internalisation of cultural standards and the internalisation of media ideals are similar constructs. Dauids et al.'s (2019) results are similar to those of the current study in that experiences of sexual objectification had a positive partially mediated relationship with drive for muscularity through the internalisation of cultural standards of appearance. The reason for the similar finding may be attributed to media and culture. It has previously been noted that the media has a widespread impact on societies that consume Western culture like South Africa. Western culture has tremendously impacted African traditional society (Sibani, 2018). Western culture has given rise to acculturation, which was explained by Sam and Berry (2010) as a process in which members of one cultural group adopt the beliefs and behaviour of another group. Sibani (2018) noted that the influence of Western culture has been material and non-material. These large material and non-material influences have led to an assimilation of Western culture and therefore, Western values. The material influence is evident in clothing and technology. Technology, in the form of internet and streaming services, has given individual access to Western media that sexualises the male body. Western culture has also influenced

the clothing that is worn, which is suited to a Western standard of beauty. A Western standard of beauty for men is portrayed as a mesomorphic body. Davids et al. (2019) conducted their study in the United States of America. South African society is exposed to Western media, which may explain the similarity in the results of the two studies.

The findings of the current study suggest that self-objectification may potentially explain the effects of the internalisation of media ideals on the drive for muscularity in men.

5.2 Recommendations

It is recommended that future research should employ a larger sample and include participants from more areas rather than just one gym. A larger sample will ensure that results can be generalised to a larger population. Furthermore, it is recommended that future studies should modify the questionnaires to avoid response biases such as extreme responses and neutral responses (or use measures with fewer response options). Sexuality may be a significant mediating variable when applying objectification theory to explain body image concerns or the drive for muscularity in men (Heath et al., 2016). Therefore, it is recommended that future studies should include sexuality as a mediating variable when assessing the relationship between self-objectification and the drive for muscularity in South African men.

5.3 Limitations of the study

A key limitation of this study was that the participants were recruited from one gym. Those participants then further identified other participants who they thought would be interested in participating in the study. This limitation presented a confirmation bias. The study was conducted by means of a self-report questionnaire and

consequently, participants may have over-reported or under-reported their experiences. Furthermore, the self-report questionnaires used Likert scales. Consequently, the participants may have selected answers that are more socially desirable. Likert scales are also limited by the options of extreme responses such as strongly disagree and strongly agree. Likert scales such as 5-point and 7-point scales allow participants to choose neutral responses. This study used a sample of 227 participants. Although the sample size was sufficient to ensure the statistical power of analyses, it was not large enough to allow the generalisability of the results.

5.4 Conclusion

The findings of the current study have been discussed in this chapter. To my knowledge, this is the first time objectification theory has been applied to men in South Africa. The results of this study concur with some previous empirical studies. As noted previously, objectification theory has produced mixed results when applied to men. However, the results of the current study revealed initial evidence that objectification theory is an appropriate theoretical lens that can be used to explain the drive for muscularity and body image concerns in South African men.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethical Clearance Letter



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Humanities
Research Ethics Committee

23 August 2018

Dear Mr du Plessis

Project: Chasing the muscle ideal: The relationship between the internalization of media ideals and self-objectification
Researcher: C du Plessis
Supervisors: Dr MS Makhubela
Department: Psychology
Reference number: 12268667 (GW20180707HS)

Thank you for your response to the Committee's correspondence of 8 August 2018.

I have pleasure in informing you that the Research Ethics Committee formally **approved** the above study at an *ad hoc* meeting held on 23 August 2018. Data collection may therefore commence.

Please note that this approval is based on the assumption that the research will be carried out along the lines laid out in the proposal. Should your actual research depart significantly from the proposed research, it will be necessary to apply for a new research approval and ethical clearance.

We wish you success with the project.

Sincerely

Prof Maxi Schoeman
Deputy Dean: Postgraduate and Research Ethics
Faculty of Humanities
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
e-mail: PGHumanities@up.ac.za

cc: Dr MS Makhubela (Suervisor)

Prof T Guse (HoD)

Appendix B: Information Letter



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Humanities
Department of Psychology

INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

PROJECT TITLE: Chasing the muscular ideal: The relationship between media internalisation and self-objectification.

PROJECT LEADER: Carl du Plessis

1. You are invited to participate in the following research project:

This research seeks to apply self-objectification theory to examine body image concerns in males in South Africa and explore media influences (the internalisation of media ideals) on male body image and the male desire for muscularity.

2. Participation in the project is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the project (without providing any reasons or consequences) at any time.

3. It is possible that you might not personally experience any advantages during the project although the knowledge that may be accumulated through the project might prove advantageous to others.
4. You are encouraged to ask any questions that you might have in connection with this project at any stage. The project leader will gladly answer your question(s).
5. There are no known consequences of completing a questionnaire about media ideals and body image. However, some individuals may react apprehensively; being sensitive to completing questions about situations that were not particularly comfortable for them. If this happens, you will be referred for debriefing at Itsoseng Clinic at no cost to you.
6. Should you at any stage feel unhappy, uncomfortable or concerned about the research, please **contact the researcher Carl du Plessis on: 076 110 6023 or his study supervisor (Dr. M. Makhubela) at the University of Pretoria on 012 420 2830.**

Appendix C: Consent Form



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Humanities
Department of Psychology

CONSENT FORM

PROJECT TITLE: Chasing the muscular ideal: The relationship between media internalisation and self-objectification.

PROJECT LEADER: Carl du Plessis

I, _____ hereby voluntarily consent to participate in the following project:

This research seeks to apply self-objectification theory to examine body image concerns in males in South Africa and explore media influences (the internalisation of media ideals) on male body image and the male desire for muscularity

I realise that:

1. The study deals with the evaluation of media influences (the internalisation of media ideals) on male body image and the male desire for muscularity in an adult community sample in Pretoria and Johannesburg, South Africa.
2. The research project, more specifically, the extent, aims and methods of the research, has been explained to me.
3. The procedure envisaged may hold some risk for me that cannot be foreseen at this stage (i.e., psychological distress as a result of completing a questionnaire on

body image).

4. The Faculty of Humanities' Research and Ethics Committee at the University of Pretoria has approved that individuals may be approached to participate in the study.
5. The project sets out the risks that can be reasonably expected as well as possible discomfort for persons participating in the research, an explanation of the anticipated advantages for myself or others that are reasonably expected from the research and alternative procedures that may be to my advantage.
6. I will be informed of any new information that may become available during the research that may influence my willingness to continue my participation.
7. Access to the records that pertain to my participation in the study will be restricted to persons directly involved in the research.
8. Any questions that I may have regarding the research or related matters will be answered by the researcher.
9. If I have any questions about or problems regarding the study or experience any undesirable effects, I may contact the project leader (Mr Carl du Plessis on 0761106023).
10. Participation in this research is voluntary and I can withdraw my participation at any stage. I have also been provided with a stamped self-addressed envelope to return the questionnaire.
11. The raw data will be securely stored at the Department of Psychology's storage room (HSB 11 - 23) for a minimum period of 15 years for archiving and reuse. During this period the raw data might also be used for further research by other researchers.
12. I indemnify the University of Pretoria and all persons involved with the above project from any liability that may arise from my participation in the above project or that may be related to it, for whatever reasons, including negligence on the part of the mentioned persons.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

SIGNATURE OF PERSON THAT INFORMED
THE RESEARCHED PERSON

Signed at _____ this ____ day of _____ 20__

Appendix D: Questionnaire

SECTION A

Instructions: Please note that the information provided below does not in any way identify you as an individual. It will be used to gain an even better understanding of the issues investigated in the study.

1. My age: _____ years

2. What is your race?

1.	Black	
2.	Coloured	
3.	Asian	
4.	White	

SECTION B:

Instructions: Please read the items below and rate the extent to which you agree with each statement. You should then circle the number in the column that best represents your tendency towards each item statement.

Items	Definitely Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Mostly Agree	Definitely Agree
1) It is important for me to look athletic.	1	2	3	4	5
2) I think a lot about looking muscular.	1	2	3	4	5
3) I want my body to look very thin.	1	2	3	4	5
4) I want my body to look like it has little fat.	1	2	3	4	5
5) I think a lot about looking thin.	1	2	3	4	5
6) I spend a lot of time doing things to look more athletic.	1	2	3	4	5
7) I think a lot about looking athletic.	1	2	3	4	5
8) I want my body to look very lean.	1	2	3	4	5
9) I think a lot about having very little body fat.	1	2	3	4	5

10) I spend a lot of time doing things to look more muscular.	1	2	3	4	5
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Instructions: Answer the following questions with reference to your family including your parents, brothers, sisters and relatives:

Items	Definitely Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Mostly Agree	Definitely Agree
11) I feel pressure from family members to look thinner.	1	2	3	4	5
12) I feel pressure from family members to improve my appearance.	1	2	3	4	5
13) Family members encourage me to decrease my level of body fat.	1	2	3	4	5
14) Family members encourage me to get into better shape.	1	2	3	4	5

Instructions: Answer the following questions with reference to your peers including your close friends, classmates and other social contacts:

Items	Definitely Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Mostly Agree	Definitely Agree
15) My peers encourage me to get thinner.	1	2	3	4	5
16) I feel pressure from my peers to	1	2	3	4	5

improve my appearance.					
17) I feel pressure from my peers to look in better shape.	1	2	3	4	5
18) I get pressure from my peers to decrease my level of body fat.	1	2	3	4	5

Instructions: Answer the following questions with reference to the media including television, magazines, the Internet, movies, billboards and advertisements:

Items	Definitely Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Mostly Agree	Definitely Agree
19) I feel pressure from the media to look in better shape.	1	2	3	4	5
20) I feel pressure from the media to look thinner.	1	2	3	4	5
21) I feel pressure from the media to improve my appearance.	1	2	3	4	5
22) I feel pressure from the media to decrease my level of body fat.	1	2	3	4	5

Section C:

Instructions: Please read each item carefully. Then, for each one, circle the number that best applies to you.

Items	Always	Very Often	often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1) I wish that I were more muscular.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2) I lift weights to build up muscle.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3) I use protein or energy supplements.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4) I drink weight gain or protein shakes.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5) I try to consume as many calories as I can in a day.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6) I feel guilty if I miss a weight training session.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7) I think I would feel more confident if I had more muscle mass.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8) Other people think I work out with weights too often.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9) I think that I would look better if I gained 10	1	2	3	4	5	6

pounds in bulk.						
10) I think about taking anabolic steroids.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11) I think that I would feel stronger if I gained a little more muscle mass.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12) I think that my weight training schedule interferes with other aspects of my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13) I think that my arms are not muscular enough.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14) I think that my chest is not muscular enough.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15) I think that my legs are not muscular enough.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Section D:

Directions: Please read each of the following items carefully and circle the number that best reflects how important each statement is to you.

Items	Not important at all	Low importance	Slightly Important	Neutral	Moderately important	Important	Very important
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1) How important is upper arm diameter to you?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2) How important is flexibility to you?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3) How important is sexual appearance to you?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4) How important is endurance to you?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5) How important is coordination to you?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6) How important is body weight to you?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7) How important is balance to you?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8) How important is stomach appearance to you?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9) How important is chest size to you?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10) How important is penis size to you?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11) How important is agility to you?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

12) How important is body hair to you?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13) How important is head hair to you (balding, thinning, etc)?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14) How important is physical attractiveness to you?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15) How important is skin to you (not race, shades)?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16) How important is height to you?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17) How important is energy to you?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18) How important are reflexes to you?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19) How important is complexion to you?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20) How important are teeth to you (colour, size, straightness)?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Section E:

Instructions: Please read the items below and rate the extent to which you agree with each statement. You should then circle the number in the column that best represents your tendency towards each item statement.

Items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1) I rarely think about how I look.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2) I think it is more important that my clothes are comfortable than whether they look good on me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3) I think more about how my body feels than how my body looks.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4) I rarely compare how I look with how other people look	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5) During the day, I think about how I look many times.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6) I often worry about whether the clothes I am wearing make me look good.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7) I rarely worry about how I look to other people	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8) I am more concerned with what my body can do than how it looks.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Instructions: Please read the items below and rate the extent to which you agree with each statement. You should then circle the number in the column that best represents your tendency towards each item statement.

Items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1) When I can't control my weight, I feel like something must be wrong with me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2) I feel ashamed of myself when I haven't made an effort to look my best	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3) I feel like I must be a bad person when I don't look as good as I could.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4) I would be ashamed for people to know what I really weigh.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5) I never worry that something is wrong with me when I am not exercising as much as I should.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6) When I'm not exercising enough, I question whether I am a good enough person.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7) Even when I can't control my weight, I think I'm an okay person.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

8) When I'm not the size I think I should be, I feel ashamed.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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