



Force of Beauty or Object of Desire? The Priming Effects of Makeup Video Advertisements for Self-Objectification in College-Aged Women



Jenna D. Johnson, Jessica C. Lucas, Zachary E. Brandon, Adrianna M. Mendoza, Kadi M. White, & Tanya L. Tompkins
Linfield College

Introduction & Aims

Background

- Women are too often valued for their beauty and have shifted their focus from character to body improvement (Brumberg, 1998).
- Objectification theory (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997) posits that sexual objectification socializes females to evaluate themselves based on looks.
- Self-objectification is the attempt to control this external perception by monitoring one's physical appearance. Women are more likely to think "How do I look?" than "What am I capable of?"
- Research suggests body-objectifying situations (i.e. trying on a swimsuit) and words can prime state self-objectification (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997; Harper & Tiggemann, 2008).
- Despite recent attempts of ad campaigns to challenge the thin ideal by featuring "real women", the effects of positive messaging are unclear (Calogero et al., 2006; Herbozo & Thompson, 2006).
- This two-part study examines the priming effects of positive and negative body-focused video makeup ads on women's levels of state self-objectification (SSO).

Research Question 1:

Will priming of SSO statements, state-related positive and negative emotions, and self-reported body-surveillance vary as a function of media exposure?

- Negative body-focused media will prime more SSO statements than positive media.
- Those in the negative body-focused media condition will report fewer positive emotions and more negative emotions in comparison to participants in the positive condition.
- Participants exposed to negative body-focused ads will report higher levels of body surveillance relative to those viewing positive advertisements (Study 2 only).

Research Question 2:

Will these effects be moderated by trait self-objectification (TSO) – the extent to which appearance-based attributes dominate physical self-conceptions?

- The priming effects will be stronger for those with high levels of TSO.

Method

	Study 1	Study 2
Mean Age	19.51 (1.63)	21.31 (1.52)
Caucasian	67%	79.5%
Asian or Pacific Islander	20.9%	8.4%
Hispanic	9.3%	7.8%
African-American	1.2%	2.4%
American Indian	1.2%	1.8%
Total N	87 women	172 women

Measures

Two measures were created to maintain the cover story of product placement and consumer preferences (e.g., naming brands, ranking marketing strategies, indicating purchasing intent).

Method

Measures

Trait Self-Objectification (TSO) (Noll & Fredrickson et al., 1998)

- Ten attributes were rank ordered on a 9-point scale (0=*least* to 9=*most*) in terms of importance to physical self concept
- The difference between 5 appearance-based (e.g., attractiveness) and 5 competence-based (e.g., strength) responses were computed with higher scores reflecting higher levels of TSO

Twenty Statements Test (TST) (Fredrickson et al., 1998)

- Following the intervention participants completed 20 "I am _____" statements used as a measure of state self-objectification (SSO)
- Coded into one of six groups: a) body shape/size (BS; ICC=.80), b) other physical appearance (OPA; ICC=.74), c) physical competence (PC; ICC=.65), d) traits/abilities (TA; ICC=.77), e) states/emotions (SE; ICC=.58), and f) uncodable (ICC=.41) with proportion scores used to reflect relative focus. In Study 2, each statement was also coded for valence (positive, negative or neutral; ICC=.61)

Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) (Watson et al., 1988b)

- 10 positive feelings (e.g., excited) and 10 negative feelings (e.g., guilty) rated on a 5-point scale (1=*not at all* to 5=*very much*)

Body Surveillance Scale (BSS) - modified (McKinley & Hyde, 1996)

- 8 items (e.g., "right now, I am thinking about how I look") rated on a 7-point scale (1=*strongly disagree* to 7=*strongly agree*) modified to assess current tendency to view the body as an outside observer

Procedures

	Study 1	Study 2
Format	Individual, in-person assessment	Online
Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive Makeup Ad: "Be a Force of Beauty" – Bare Minerals Negative Body-Focused Makeup Ad: Scarlett Johansson – Dolce & Gabbana, Maybelline Neutral Makeup Ad Control: Philosophy – no images or actresses No Video Control: Dog Food reviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive Negative Control
2 ½ minutes Random Assignment		
Coding	Independent coders, not blinded (overall inter-rater reliability = .70)	Blind; coded for valence

Results

Study 1

- Only TA statements differed significantly between conditions, $F(2,83) = 4.13, p < .02$, with participants in the negative condition reporting fewer TA statements relative to the other conditions.
- Participants assigned to the positive condition reported significantly higher positive PANAS scores than those assigned to the negative body-objectifying condition, $F(3, 83) = 3.66, p < .05$.

Results

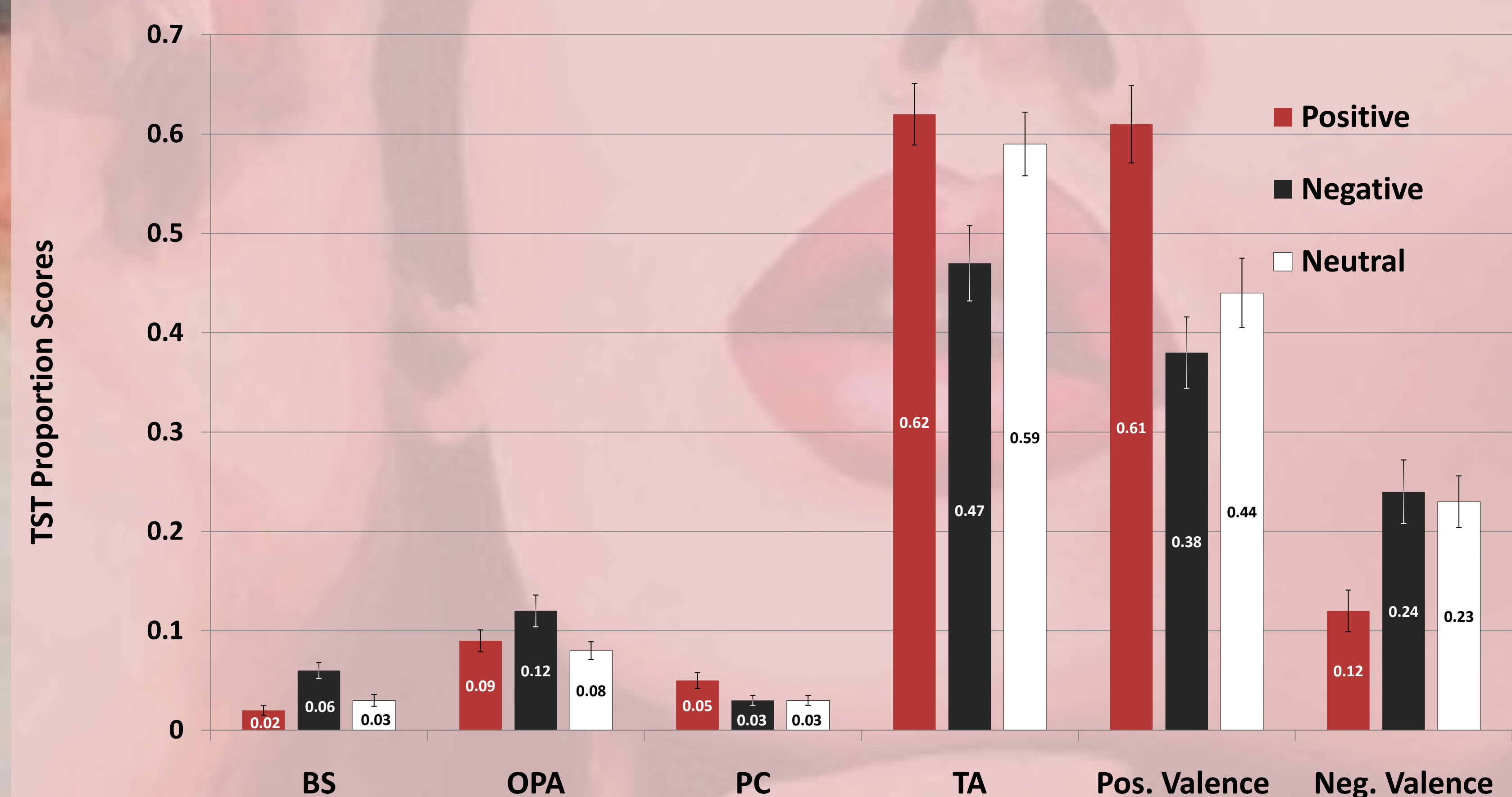
Study 1

- Using a median split to identify individuals low and high on TSO, we found that TSO moderated these priming effects for TA statements, with significant main effects for those high on TSO only, $F(3, 40) = 3.58, p < .05$. Post hoc analyses revealed that high self-objectifiers reported significantly fewer TA statements when primed by self-objectifying media relative to those who viewed positive ads.

Study 2

- In addition to replicating priming effects for TA statements, significant differences were found for all categories of SSO except for SE statements (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Priming effects of makeup advertisements on state self-objectification



Significant differences in BS statements, $F(162) = 7.31, p < .001$, with more statements in the negative condition than in the positive, $p < .002$, and neutral, $p < .012$, conditions. Significant differences in OPA statements, $F(162) = 3.44, p < .03$, with more statements in the negative condition than in the neutral condition, $p < .055$. Significant differences in PC statements, $F(162) = 4.27, p < .02$, with more statements in the positive condition than in the negative, $p < .03$, and neutral, $p < .05$, conditions. Significant differences in TA statements, $F(162) = 5.94, p < .003$, with fewer statements in the negative condition than in the positive, $p < .006$, and neutral, $p < .04$, conditions. Significant differences in positive valence statements, $F(162) = 10.39, p < .000$, with more statements in the positive condition than in the negative, $p < .000$, and neutral, $p < .005$, conditions. Significant differences in negative valence statements, $F(162) = 5.65, p < .004$, with fewer statements in the positive condition than in the negative, $p < .01$, and neutral, $p < .01$, conditions.

- Moderated multiple regressions were used to determine whether TSO moderated the priming effects of makeup ads. TSO significantly influenced the relationship between negative body-focused media and its priming effects for body shape statements, $\Delta R^2 = .05, F_{\text{change}}(1, 154) = 4.41, p < .05$, and other physical appearance, $\Delta R^2 = .11, F_{\text{change}}(1, 154) = 10.38, p < .001$, suggesting that TSO was a significant moderator of priming effects for shape and appearance. Inspection of these interactions revealed that negative body-focused ads primed self-objectifying statements only for those high on TSO (see Figures 2 and 3).

- Unexpectedly, there were no significant differences across conditions for positive or negative affect or for body-surveillance scores.

Conclusions

Aligned with prior findings that objectifying situations can prime for SSO (Fredrickson et al., 1998), brief exposure to objectifying makeup ads shifted participants' focus from a broader concept of self (e.g., traits/abilities, physical competence) to a more body-objectified view. Women with a tendency to self-objectify were especially vulnerable to the negative effects of such exposure. In contrast to past research (Roberts & Gettman, 2004), no effects were found for levels of negative emotions. Possibly, participants' regular interactions with objectifying media dampened this effect. Non-significant findings for the BSS suggest differences in implicit (TST) and explicit cognitive processes relating to SSO. While differences in levels of positive emotion did not replicate in Study 2, we explored the possibility of an order effect by switching the order of the PANAS and BSS. Pilot data from a third study suggest that women were primed by the BSS in Study 2, which diminished the higher levels of positive affect reported by those in the positive media condition. These findings indicate that marketers should eschew advertising that sexually objectifies women and promotes unattainable beauty goals in favor of positive messages that feature dynamic women. Future research should examine the effects of longer and/or multiple exposures to objectifying and positive video media.

Figure 2. Trait self-objectification as a moderator of intervention effects for body shape and size statements

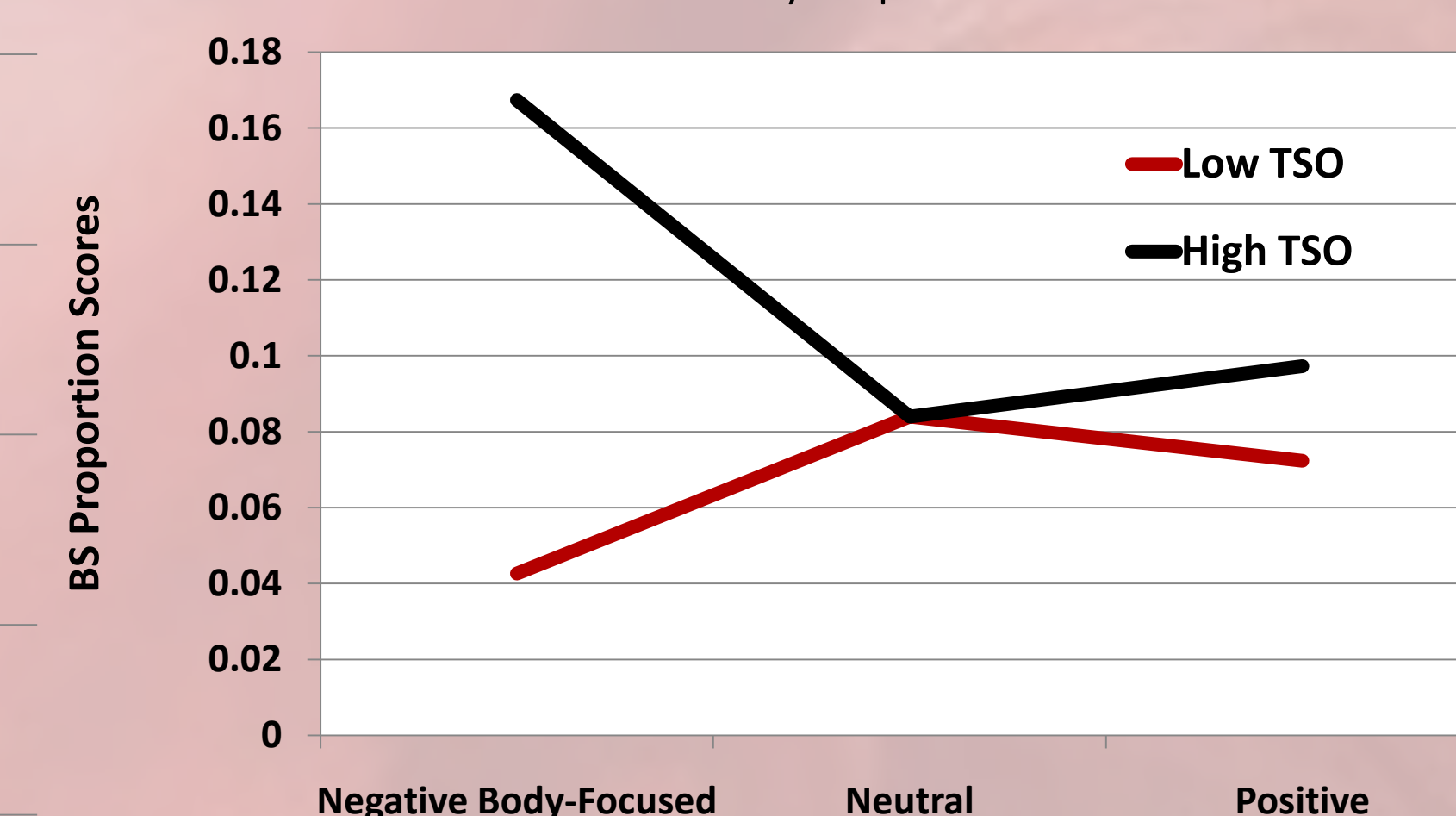


Figure 3. Trait self-objectification as a moderator of intervention effects for other physical appearance statements

