The Impact of Mechanistic and Animalistic Dehumanization on the Perception of African American and European American Women

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BACKGROUND

Objectification and Media
- 3,000 ads a day (Kilbourne, 2010)
- 2 years spent watching ads (Kilbourne, 2010)
- Only 8% of it is consciously processed (Kilbourne, 2010)

Consequences of Objectification
- Women’s self-objectification
  - Eating disorders, depression, etc.
- May be perceived as
  - Less human
  - Less intelligent, friendly, moral
  - More object-like
- Dehumanization increases when objectified animalistically and mechanistically

PURPOSE

The present work explored whether objectified African American (AA) women are dehumanized to a greater degree than their European American (EA) women counterparts.

Humiliation
AA < EA
Objectification
AA > EA
Violence
AA > EA

PROCEDURES

- IRB approval obtained
- Images were created using “real life women” and were prompted...
- Survey was administered using Qualtrics software
- Participants completed “Perceptions of Ourselves, Other People, and Situations” through Amazon Mechanical Turk

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants
- N = 194 (99 females, 94 males)
- 7.7% African American, 73.7% Caucasian, 1.5% Native American, 8.8% Asian/Pacific Islander, 5.7% Hispanic and 2.6% other
- Age: 19-69 years (M = 34.47, SD = 11.93)
- 90.2% Heterosexual, 2.6% gay or lesbian and 7.2% bisexual

Humanization Scales (Barthol et al., 2013; Fiske et al., 2002; Gray et al., 2011)
- Competence (e.g., appeared intelligent) (α = .94)
- Warmth (e.g., appeared likeable) (α = .93)
- Morality (appeared trustworthy) (r = .73)
- Agency (e.g., capable of self-control) (α = .84)
- Experience (e.g., capable of feeling fear, hunger, etc.) (α = .80)
- Sexual Experience (e.g., capable of sexual arousal, pleasure) (α = .95)
- Mechanistic Dehumanization (e.g., appeared open-minded) (α = .62)
- Animalistic Dehumanization (e.g., appeared refined, rational) (α = .79)

Objectification (Stelos & Hargreaves, 2005; Noll, 1998)
- Sexual Objectification (e.g., sex appeal) (α = .89)
- Race-specific Objectification (e.g., skin tone) (α = .91)
- Non-objectification (e.g., education) (α = .62)

Violence (Loughlan et al., 2010)
- Moral Treatment
- Harm

Data Analysis
Dependent variables (e.g., warmth, competence, morality, etc.) were submitted to 2 target race (European American, African American) X 2 dehumanization (animalistic, mechanistic) between participants ANOVA

RESULTS

- Competence: European American > African American
- Warmth: European American > African American
- Morality: European American > African American
- Agency: European American > African American
- Mechanistic Dehumanization: European American > African American
- Animalistic Dehumanization: European American > African American

CONCLUSIONS

Summary
- The results were inconsistent with our hypotheses but still very interesting
- Mechanistic dehumanization was consistently negative throughout the study

Future Directions
- Replicate
- Use different, but more equivalent ads
- Use non-objectify, humanizing controls
- Other dependent variables

Limitations
- Unable to locate professionally curated photos
- The sample was not racially diverse

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