

Abstract

Self-objectification is the internalization of sexual objectification, which is the experience of being treated as a body whose greatest value lies in its usefulness to or consumption by others (e.g., physically, sexually, and emotionally), rather than its competence and personal qualities. Often, when individuals are socialized to base their inherent sense of self-worth on appearance-based attributes and what their bodies can do for others, they become more likely to engage in vigilant body monitoring of their physical appearance. However, body monitoring has been linked to greater body shame and dissatisfaction, depressive symptoms, and eating disorders. In an ongoing study, we recruited undergraduate participants ($N = 130$) to increase our understanding of how body monitoring predicts disordered eating behaviors and negative body beliefs. Participants completed three questionnaires: 1) Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (Self-Surveillance subscale), which measures engagement in body monitoring, 2) Intuitive Eating Scale–2, which measures the extent to which individuals eat according to physiological cues, and 3) Experience of Embodiment Scale, which measures the diverse ways individuals' bodies engage with their environments. Overall, our findings indicated that individuals who reported greater body monitoring were less likely to trust their physiological hunger cues and eat intuitively. Additionally, body monitoring was significantly associated with key elements of embodiment, positively predicting body discomfort and body responsiveness, while negatively predicting comfortable bodily connections and resisting objectification. Ultimately, future research should build on these findings to further explore how disordered eating patterns and diverse bodily experiences manifest through socially constructed self-objectifying body beliefs and behaviors.