

Public Abstract

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Title:A Study of the Social and Cognitive Effects of Sexual Objectification in Video Games on Male Gamers

Sexual objectification is a popular media tool to capture the attention of viewers and consumers, from print advertisements to television. As media technology has developed, so has the presentation of sexual objectification. Video gaming offers a more immersive experience, allowing players to transport themselves into environments. Research on this element of gaming is lacking depth and breadth. This project utilized experimental design to test whether frequent gamers who played as a sexually objectified character had different cognitive processes during gaming or attitudes towards women after gaming than those who played as a non-objectified character. Using psychophysiological tools and a post-test questionnaire, this study attempted to index attention, arousal, and potentially dangerous attitudes towards women; however, the manipulation was not disguised enough and the social effects were not validly indexed. This study found that individuals exposed to a sexually objectified female character had stronger orienting responses, indicating motivationally relevant attention, and no difference in arousal level than those exposed to the control, a fully clothed female character. The gaming industry should be cautious of including superfluous objectification because it is not shown to be significantly more arousing or exciting for the gamers. The gamers are showing more attention, and that attention could translate into antisocial behaviors in society. Opponents of sexual objectification in video games should push to find significant carryover effects. Future research should focus on developing valid measures to index attitudes towards women, such as methodologies involving implicit measures or longer post-tests, and more realistic gaming experiences that still maintains experimental control.