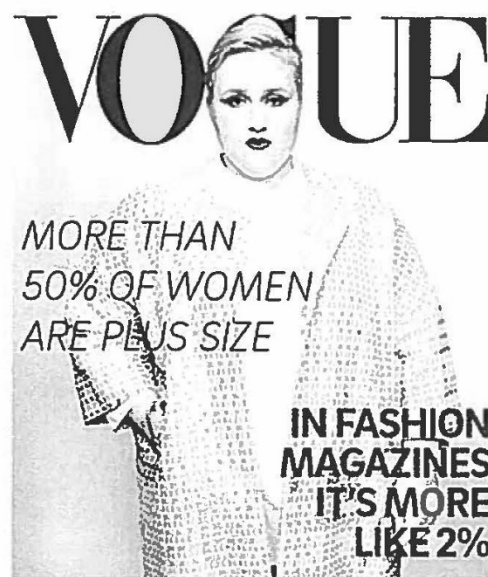


## Candidate 2 evidence

### Higher Sociology

**An investigation into the objectification of women  
in the media.**



**Word Count: 2188**

### Introduction to Social Issue

Primary socialisation teaches girls to be passive and care about their appearance from a young age. While boys may be encouraged to play and “get their clothes dirty”, girls are encouraged to wear pretty, impracticable clothing and look clean and tidy. This develops through childhood where there is an increasing pressure on girls to look attractive. The media reinforces gender norms and values in western society by providing unrealistic ideas of gender stereotypes. The media is an agency of secondary socialisation which shapes identity by reinforcing significantly different representations of males and females through gender ideals and cultural expectations. Women's achievements in the media are underreported and not valued because symbolic annihilation means coverage of women in the media tends to be based on their looks and sex appeal instead of their accomplishments. We live in a patriarchal society where males dominate the media and produce content of the ideal woman. Statistics reveal that women are sexualised in the media 3 times more often than men. Likewise, The Guardian (2016) reported that 28.8% of women on screen wore sexually revealing clothes as opposed to only 7% of men, and 26% of female actors got partially naked as opposed to only 9% of male actors. Marxists feminists argue that the media sexualises women for capitalism and this objectification is used to sell products and services.

### Sociological significance

The sociological significance of women in the media is that women continue to be treated as objects, while men are treated as subjects. Wesleyan University found women being sexualised in 52% of the advertisements in magazines, however in specifically men's magazines women were sexualised in 76% of the content. This highlights the extreme objectification of women in the media and demonstrates why women are perceived to have lower status than their male counterparts. Moreover, the American Psychological Association stated that objectification of women in the media is not only negatively affecting women but is also increasing the misperceptions that men have about females.

### Hypothesis

The media is an important form of secondary socialisation which supports the patriarchy by objectifying women and feminist opinion differs about the impact.

### Findings from Source 1

In the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Kant described objectification as “the lowering of a person, being with humanity, to the status of an object”. Kant believes that sexuality is extremely problematic when it is represented outside a monogamous marriage and this leads to objectification of females. Women are identified by their bodies and are valued by how they look. Likewise, women often feel the need to correct their bodies and appearance to make them look more attractive. Feminists argue that this is because women want to appear as things to be decorated and gazed upon. Bartky found that women in patriarchal societies feel that males are watching them and they feel a responsibility to look pleasing to men and so learn to see themselves as though from the outside. Bartky also discusses that the objectification of women aims to produce a body of a certain size of shape and this changes depending on the ideal body during that time. Susan Bordo found that women are more likely to be obsessed with dieting than men, and this has led to serious diseases such as anorexia and bulimia in which 90% of all anorexics are women. Bartky states that a woman’s body is an “ornamented surface” in which women must take care of their skin, be wrinkle free and wear makeup to disguise imperfections. Women also internalise the idea to look more feminine and this is reinforced by parents during primary socialisation, and teachers, male partners and the media throughout lifelong secondary socialisation. Langton states that women are objectified and go along with this because of the desires and beliefs of men and because we live in a patriarchal society where men have the power to force women to internalise gender norms.

However, Janet Richards found nothing wrong with objectifying women attempting to be sensually pleasing. Natasha Walter backs this up by suggesting appearance is not objectifying because males engage in self decoration and also seek to be admired by women. Men have also started to spend more time, money and effort on their appearance and there is male magazines which stress how males should look in terms of how to look more masculine, what clothes look best as well as creams and cosmetics. Alan Soble suggests that objectification is not necessarily a bad thing because everyone is an object and therefore no one can be objectified. He also argues that everyone is a potential victim of objectification.

### Findings from Source 2

In "The Balance Careers" website, Paul Suggett found that since advertising was created, the problems of women being objectified in the media have gotten worse. Suggett also found that software has allowed women's bodies to be modified, and this creates an impossible expectation of women which is harmful to society. Suggett found that the media have found a "new type of woman" which does not exist in the real world, and is called the "Barbie doll look". This involves women having no wrinkles or blemishes, long legs, a small waist, radiant hair and straight and shiny white teeth. He also discovered that primary socialisation means young boys are taught to desire this type of woman, and girls are socialised to believe that they must look like this woman. However, it was also found that this type of woman does not exist, and the ideal woman is a result of photoshop. Suggett found that men are taught in primary socialisation to view women as objects and the patriarchy is dominated by males, therefore the media reinforces these ideas.

### Link between source 1 and theory / topic

Radical feminists believe we live in a patriarchal society where women are the subject class and this will only be changed by the elimination of male supremacy. Radical feminists aim to destroy the patriarchy rather than making legal changes to achieve gender equality and they believe that most women have a false consciousness of how they should look which is imposed by the patriarchy. This is why women feel the need to correct their bodies and look attractive for males. Radical feminists would suggest the objectification of women in the media is harmful and damaging to women because males have the power to control and oppress women. Women follow this because they internalise the gender norms from the patriarchal society that we live in.

However, postmodern feminists suggest that although women are subject to discrimination, it is not always a bad thing because femininity is viewed as a positive identity. Moreover, postmodern feminists argue that males are also subject to objectification. They believe the 'objectification' of men in the media, including the television show 'Poldark', is a clear example of men being sexualised in the media. The TV show shows semi nude scenes of actor, Aidan Turner on a beach or at a pool. However, many feminists argue that men, unlike women, are still treated as subjects even when they are objectified. For example, the objectification of Aidan Turner in this case shows him next to the beach or at a pool which is a place where it is acceptable for males to be topless, however women are more likely to be objectified in non context situations such as in offices for TV programmes and for advertising. This means they are represented as objects and not subjects. Moreover, other feminists argue that the sexualisation of men and women are different; women are presented as resources while men are treated as 'eye candy'. Actor Aidan Turner stated that he did not feel objectified at any point in the TV programme, and some feminists would argue that this is because despite being 'objectified' he was still presented in a masculine and active way, therefore, he was treated as a subject rather than an object.

### Link between source 2 and theory / topic

Feminists may argue that the media produce unrealistic beauty standards and they suggest that the male dominated media reinforce the idea that it is a women's responsibility to be slim and look attractive and this is internalised by women through socialisation. Radical feminists argue that the "new type of women" is unrealistic and a construct which the patriarchy use to objectify women. They argue that women are under a false consciousness and they have internalised this from the patriarchy and this is why some postmodern feminists believe objectification is positive and empowering for women.

### Evaluate source 1

One of the sources I used was an article from The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. This meant it was a useful secondary source. This was reliable because it maintains up to date work which is written by professionals from around the world. It is supported by Stanford University which makes it a reliable source because the information is backed up by a recognized world leading university. The article was written in 2010 however revisited in 2015 and this makes it useful because the information had been updated. However, the article was largely formed on anecdotal evidence which may have meant it was biased. It only looked at the objectification of women through a feminist framework this is a conflict theory which studies the inequality as a struggle within society. One strength of the evidence was that it looked at the objectification of women from a sociological view and this was useful because it included a variety of sociologists views throughout the article. However, the article was made up of sociologists opinions which were mostly not backed up by empirical evidence such as statistics therefore this was a weakness of the source.

### Evaluate source 2

Another source I used was an article which was written by Paul Suggett in 2019 called 'The Objectification of Women in Advertising'. Suggett's findings was based on empirical evidence rather than anecdote, and this was useful because it provides evidence to support the hypothesis. Suggett has been a freelance journalist and advertising consultant for 20 years and this was a strength because he is an expert in advertising in the media and therefore has specialist knowledge. However, a disadvantage of this source was that it is anecdotal and did not look at the objectification of women with a sociological imagination and may be biased because the article is written from his experience over 20 years therefore it is likely to be value-laden.

### The research findings

The research findings of the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy and Paul Sugglet support the hypothesis. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy gathers the opinions of various sociologists who all state there is objectification of women in the media, however postmodern feminists in this source believe it is positive and empowering, and radical feminists believe that objectification is negative and objectifying to women. Paul Sugglet supports the hypothesis because he found that in his 20 years of experience in advertising, the objectification of women was prominent and extremely negative and unrealistic.

### Theoretical explanations of the topic

The findings in this source support the hypothesis as they both agree that the media objectifies women. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy includes arguments from radical feminists who believe the objectification of women is harmful and postmodern feminists who believe the objectification of women is positive and expressive.

Radical feminists in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy claim that women have a false consciousness of what they should look like, and this is internalised through the patriarchy. The only way for this to stop would be to destroy the patriarchal society we live in using force. It also has arguments from postmodern feminists who state that males can also be objectified, and it is not a bad thing for women to be objectified because it is expressive and empowers women.

Radical feminists may respond to Paul Sugglet by suggesting that the media advertise unrealistic beauty standards and women internalise this from the patriarchy.

### The research methods used

The research method I used for source one was an article found online which included sociologists opinions and findings of the sexualisation of women in the media. This was useful because it was easy to find and had been backed up by Stanford University which is a reliable source. Additionally, it included a wide range of feminist views.

The research method I used to find Paul Sugglet's article was by looking online for sociological journals, articles and reports. Paul Sugglet's article was useful because it was easy to find and had a link to his page which stated who he was. This was also useful because it stated that he was an expert in advertising and had been working in advertising for 20 years. The article was also up to date and this was useful because it is still relevant.

Any other relevant information

In the future, I would recommend to investigate what has been done to decrease the objectification of women in the media. Despite the Scottish Government tackling gender issues, very little has been done to improve on the objectification of women in the media and this would be an important topic to investigate further.

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Source 1 : Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2015. Feminist Perspectives on Objectification. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-objectification/>

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