

ORAL PRESENTATION

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Extending the evidence base for eating disorders prevention: the impact of a dissonance-based intervention on positive body image, intuitive eating and self-objectification

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From 2014 ANZAED Conference: Driven Bodies Driven Brains
Fremantle, Australia. 22-23 August 2014

Recently, there have been significant advances in eating disorders (ED) prevention. Cognitive dissonance programs have demonstrated reductions in ED risk factors outlined in the dual pathway model (Stice, 1994) among university-age women in the USA and the UK. However, self-objectification theory proposes additional empirically supported risk-factors for EDs. In addition, body image research has recently expanded its focus to consider the promotion of positive body image. The present study examines the impact of a dissonance-based intervention on self-objectification, positive body image, and intuitive eating. Sixty-nine British women (M=19.06 years) took part in the intervention as part of their undergraduate psychology coursework. A separate sample of 47 undergraduate women formed a non-randomized control group. Baseline measures typically used to evaluate the intervention were administered alongside measures of self-objectification, positive body image, intuitive eating and life satisfaction pre- and immediate post- intervention, and at 8-week follow-up. As hypothesised, the intervention led to significant improvements relative to the control group in body dissatisfaction, dietary restraint, surveillance, body shame, body appreciation and intuitive eating at post-intervention and 8 week follow-up. It also improved life satisfaction at post-intervention only. The results suggest that dissonance-based interventions have benefits beyond risk factors identified in the dual-pathway model.

This abstract was presented in the **Prevention & Public Health** stream of the 2014 ANZAED Conference.

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Published: 24 November 2014

doi:10.1186/2050-2974-2-S1-O38

Cite this article as: Diedrichs et al.: Extending the evidence base for eating disorders prevention: the impact of a dissonance-based intervention on positive body image, intuitive eating and self-objectification. *Journal of Eating Disorders* 2014 **2**(Suppl 1):O38.

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