Expanding Models Testing Media Contributions to Self-Sexualization

Petal Grower¹, L. Monique Ward¹, and Jolien Trekels²

Abstract

Although everyday exposure to mainstream media is theorized to be associated with women’s self-objectification, empirical tests of this association have yielded mixed results. There are several possible explanations for these mixed results. For example, it may be that mainstream media relate to women’s broader tendency to self-sexualize rather than to self-objectify, that newer forms of media (i.e., social media) should be incorporated into these models, or that these associations may operate indirectly. Accordingly, the current study examines how traditional media and Facebook investment are associated with women’s tendency to self-sexualize and tests whether these associations are mediated by the view of women as sexual objects, internalization of the thin ideal, and perceived pressure to conform to this ideal. Structural equation modeling demonstrated that magazine and Facebook investment predicted only internalization of the thin ideal, whereas reality television and sitcom exposure predicted all three mediators. Media use was indirectly related to self-sexualization through internalization of the thin ideal and the view of women as sexual objects. These results support the value of incorporating broader definitions of self-sexualization, diverse forms of media, and potential mediators into future models.

Keywords

sexualization, objectification, traditional media, social media, mediators

Objectification theorists (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; McKinley & Hyde, 1996) propose that women in Western society must navigate a culture that views them not as active agents but rather as sexual objects, a collection of body parts whose value is determined by their physical appearance and sexual attractiveness to others. Over time, women come to internalize this third-person perspective and engage in self-objectification, valuing the external, observable characteristics of their body more than the internal, unobservable characteristics (Noll & Fredrickson, 1998). As part of this process, women are believed to engage in body surveillance or body monitoring, whereby they continually assess the extent to which their external appearance aligns with culturally valued ideals. The maintenance of this so-called objectified body consciousness (McKinley & Hyde, 1996) has been theoretically and empirically linked to reduced awareness of internal bodily states, reduced flow (i.e., mental focus or concentration), disordered eating, and sexual dysfunction (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Moradi & Huang, 2008).

One of the many socialization agents believed to contribute to women’s development of an objectified body consciousness are the mainstream media, the content of which frequently equates women’s value as people to their sexual attractiveness. The power of these portrayals in triggering self-objectification may come both from their prevalence and their accessibility. Indeed, sexually objectifying portrayals have been observed at high rates in primetime and reality television, in music videos, and in advertising (Aubrey & Frisby, 2011; Flynn, Park, Morin, & Stana, 2015; Messineo, 2008; Smith, Choueiti, Prescott, & Pieper, 2012; Turner, 2011). Moreover, adolescents and emerging adults, respectively, spend on average 8 and 12 hr consuming media each day, creating circumstances in which regular exposure to sexually objectifying images of women is likely chronic and virtually unavoidable (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010; Ward, Seabrook, Giaccardi, & Zuo, 2015).

However, few studies have actually examined the direct link between everyday media use and self-objectification among youth (see Ward, 2016, for a review), and the pattern of results that has emerged is inconsistent. Within this small body of literature, self-objectification is typically operationalized as either the tendency to surveil one’s own body (McKinley & Hyde, 1996) or as the tendency to value observable, appearance-related aspects of the body more than unobservable, competence-related aspects of the body.

¹University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, USA
²University of Leuven, Belgium

Corresponding Author:
Petal Grower, University of Michigan, 530 Church Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1043, USA.
Email: pgrower@umich.edu
(Noll & Fredrickson, 1998). A few studies have successfully linked composite measures of media consumption to valuing body appearance over body competence (Aubrey, 2006b; Nowatzki & Morry, 2009). Other studies have found associations between sexually objectifying television content and valuing body appearance over body competence (Aubrey, 2006a; Vandenbosch, Muise, Eggermont, & Impett, 2015). Finally, several studies have linked consumption of sexually objectifying magazines (particularly beauty/fashion magazines or other appearance-oriented magazines) both to valuing body appearance over body competence and to body surveillance (Aubrey, 2007; Fardouly, Diedrichs, Vartanian, & Halliwell, 2015; Morry & Staska, 2001; Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2012, 2015).

However, there are also studies that have demonstrated null results. For example, some studies have failed to find a link between sexually objectifying television and self-objectification (Fardouly et al., 2015; Slater & Tiggemann, 2015; Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2012; Zurbriggen, Ramsey, & Jaworski, 2011) or have linked media exposure to one component of sexual objectification but not others (i.e., valuing body appearance over body competence but not body surveillance; Aubrey, 2006a, 2007). Other studies have found inconsistent results when examining fitness magazines specifically or sexually objectifying magazines more generally (Morry & Staska, 2001).

One Potential Culprit: Self-Objectification Versus Self-Sexualization

There are several possible explanations for the inconsistent results observed in this literature. One potential explanation is the fact that these studies emphasize self-objectification alone as the outcome of interest. Although these studies build upon prior literature by measuring body surveillance and self-objectification (operationalized as valuing body appearance over body competence), it may be that self-objectification alone does not best capture how women respond when exposed to sexually objectified women in the media. Instead, it may be the case that chronic exposure to sexually objectified portrayals in mainstream media relates to women’s tendency not only to self-objectify, but also to their tendency to self-sexualize, which includes elements that extend above and beyond self-objectification. The American Psychological Association [APA] Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls (APA, 2007) defines sexualization as occurring when

a person’s value comes only from his or her sexual appeal or behavior, to the exclusion of other characteristics; OR a person is held to a standard that equates physical attractiveness (narrowly defined) with being sexy; OR a person is sexually objectified—that is, made into a thing for others’ sexual use; OR sexuality is inappropriately imposed upon a person. (p. 1)

Under this definition, self-objectification is just one component of self-sexualization, which may more accurately represent how women respond to chronic exposure to sexual objectification in the media. Women may not only learn to self-objectify from the media but may also internalize messages about how their sex appeal contributes to their sense of self-worth. For this reason, it is possible that studies examining self-sexualization may find more consistent links than those examining self-objectification alone.

Two measures commonly employed in the examination of this broader construct of self-sexualization are the Enjoyment of Sexualization Scale (ESS; Liss, Erchull, & Ramsey, 2011) and the Sexual Appeal subscale of the Self-Worth Scale (SASW; Gordon & Ward, 2000). Following the definition of sexualization outlined by the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls (APA, 2007), these measures work well to capture both women’s potential enjoyment in being valued for their sexiness and women’s valuing of themselves primarily for their sexual appeal to others. The ESS was designed to assess the extent to which women seek to and enjoy emphasizing their sexiness, two messages that are commonly purveyed through mainstream media. In developing the ESS, the authors found significant correlations between enjoyment of sexualization, body surveillance, self-objectification, and engagement in self-sexualizing behaviors, though these significant correlations do not exceed .5. Together, these data suggest that these items reflect similar, but not completely overlapping, constructs.

Similarly, the SASW has been used successfully as part of a latent variable capturing self-sexualization in three studies (Manago, Ward, Lemm, Reed, & Seabrook, 2015; Ward, Seabrook, Grower, Giaccardi, & Lippman, 2018; Ward, Seabrook, Manago, & Reed, 2016). Items on this scale reflect the extent to which an individual’s self-worth is grounded in her or his romantic or sexual appeal to others. In each study in which it was used, correlations between SASW, ESS, and Body Surveillance were significant and ranged from .41 to .50. Again, the fact that correlations between these variables did not exceed .5 suggests that this scale may be capturing some unique component of self-sexualization.

Accordingly, we argue that the existing literature provides support for using these scales together to assess self-sexualization, providing a means to better understand how women may internalize different media messages and how these media messages may influence women’s beliefs about themselves and their bodies. These multiple measures serve as a way of capturing the multi-dimensional construct of self-sexualization. If models assessing self-sexualization rather than self-objectification were to find more consistent results, this outcome would lend credence to the notion that including aspects of sexualization is an important next step in clarifying and understanding the link between everyday mainstream media consumption and women’s feelings about their bodies.
A Second Potential Culprit: Traditional Media Versus Social Media

The second potential explanation for the inconsistent results found in the existing literature is the conceptualization and measurement of the media involved. Specifically, it may be important to move beyond measures of activity on social networking sites (SNS) and instead consider the extent to which a person is invested or involved with social media. Social media are increasingly vital components of individuals’ media diets. At the time of data collection, Facebook was the most popular SNS among teens and young adults; estimates indicate that among 18- to 29-year-old women, 87% used Facebook in 2014 (Duggan, Ellison, Lampe, Lenhart, & Madden, 2015; Lenhart, 2015). More recent data show that 43% of teens use Facebook, with 15% reporting that they use it the most compared with several other SNS (Common Sense Media, 2018). Not only is social media use prevalent, but these media differ fundamentally from traditional media in their interactivity. Users not only consume but also construct their social media environments, suggesting that these media may have a particularly potent impact on women’s tendency to self-sexualize. Moreover, the “characters” on social media consist of an individual’s peers, perhaps serving to reinforce the notion that the ideals presented therein are particularly relevant for the self to obtain (Perloff, 2014). For these reasons, users of SNS may be particularly affected by the content.

Early research in this domain examined whether the amount of time spent using social media affected women’s feelings about their body and their tendencies to self-objectify. Here, findings demonstrated that women who spent more time on SNS such as Facebook and MySpace reported greater endorsement of the thin ideal, a greater tendency to engage in social comparison, more body dissatisfaction, and higher levels of body surveillance when compared with women who spent less time on SNS (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2015; Holland & Tiggemann, 2016; Tiggemann & Slater, 2014, 2015, 2017). Of particular note, some of this research implicated SNS as being more influential than traditional media in their potential associations with self-objectification. For example, Vandenbosch and Eggermont (2012) found that in a model with both traditional media and SNS, only the use of SNS was directly related to self-objectification. Girls in this study who reported viewing higher levels of sexually objectifying content on their feeds also reported higher endorsement of Western beauty ideals, a greater valuation of appearance in their self-worth, and higher levels body surveillance.

Other research has examined how different SNS or different features of these SNS might be associated with women’s self-objectification tendencies (e.g., differential influences of photo-based SNS vs. text-based SNS; posting photos vs. status updates; Manago et al., 2015; Mingoia, Hutchinson, Wilson, & Gleaves, 2017; Saunders & Eaton, 2018). For example, in the case of photo-based activity, research has illustrated that women who report engaging in more photo-heavy activity online also report higher levels of appearance self-worth, greater endorsement of the thin ideal, higher levels of body shame, a greater tendency to surveil their bodies, and are more likely to incorporate self-sexualizing elements in their own photos (based on profiles created in the context of an experiment; R. Cohen, Newton-John, & Slater, 2017; de Vries & Peter, 2013; Salomon & Brown, 2018). Women who reported viewing a lot of photos on SNS also reported greater weight dissatisfaction, stronger endorsement of the thin ideal, and higher levels self-objectification (Meier & Gray, 2014). Other work has shown that using SNS to monitor attractive peers, or having appearance-oriented conversations with peers, is linked to adolescents’ self-reported tendency to self-objectify, to surveil their bodies, and to self-sexualize (Trekels, Ward, & Eggermont, 2018; Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2015).

This small body of work lends support to the idea that SNS may provide particularly relevant models of sexually objectified women, even more so than other types of media. Given this pattern of results and the unique way in which women can engage with social media, we feel that it is important to incorporate not only social media usage but also social media investment into models linking media use, self-objectification, and self-sexualization. By including diverse forms of media, researchers may better capture individuals’ real-world media diets and thus construct a richer understanding of how exposure to sexually objectifying media relates to individuals’ tendencies to self-sexualize.

Third Potential Culprit: Direct Versus Mediated Connections

As a final possible explanation for the inconsistent results in the current literature, we argue that it is possible that associations between women’s media use and their tendency to self-sexualize may operate indirectly; because most studies have focused on direct effects models, they may not be fully capturing the process at hand. There is both theoretical and empirical precedent in the literature to suggest that the link between media use and other body image outcomes (e.g., body dissatisfaction) may involve several potential mediators, including body-related cognitions and affect. One mediator proposed is women’s internalization of the thin ideal (Rousseau, Beyens, Eggermont, & Vandenbosch, 2017; Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2015). Thin-ideal internalization has been defined as the extent to which women are aware of the importance placed on appearance in Western cultures and internalize these beliefs by endorsing and desiring to emulate these social standards (Groesz, Levine, & Murmen, 2002; Thompson & Stice, 2001).

One common model examining the potential mediating role of thin-ideal internalization is the three-step process of self-objectification proposed by Vandenbosch and Eggermont (2012). These authors propose that women consider the thin
ideal presented in the media as an appropriate standard for their own appearance and come to value the observable, appearance-related aspects of their body more than the unobservable, competence-related aspects of their body. This internalizing of the thin ideal and valuing body appearance over body competence relates to women’s tendency to surveil their bodies in an ongoing effort to ensure their bodies are conforming to these media-driven standards of beauty (Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2012, 2015). This model has been supported with empirical data and highlights the potentially vital role of internalization as a cognitive process underlying the association between media and self-sexualization, as internalization of the thin ideal was correlated with almost all types of media assessed. In addition, body surveillance was seldom directly related to media use and instead operated through internalization of appearance ideals. Together, this work provides empirical evidence that the media serve as purveyors of the thin ideal, and that the extent to which women internalize this ideal may serve as a powerful mechanism undergirding their tendency to self-objectify and potentially to self-sexualize.

A second potential mediator is the pressure women perceive to conform to media ideals. Given the way in which Western culture values the thin ideal, it has been theorized that women are likely to perceive pressure from various sources, including the media, their friends, and their family, to conform to this ideal (Myers & Crowther, 2007; Stice, 2002). Research has supported an association between these perceived sociocultural pressures and body dissatisfaction both experimentally and in correlational research (Groesz et al., 2002; Myers & Crowther, 2007; Stice & Whitenton, 2002). In a similar vein, researchers have proposed that perceived pressure to conform to media ideals might contribute to women’s tendency to self-objectify. It stands to reason that chronic exposure to sexually objectifying media creates a sense of pressure for female consumers not only to obtain the bodies presented in media but also to construct notions of the self that are similarly reductive (i.e., objectified or sexualized). Although this association has only been tested empirically in a few studies (e.g., Tylka & Hill, 2004), the work that does exist provides preliminary support to the idea that pressure contributes to women’s tendency to self-objectify. For example, Knauss, Paxton, and Alsaker (2008) found that greater perceived pressure from the media (both directly and through greater thin-ideal internalization) was linked to adolescents’ tendency to monitor their bodies. In line with this thinking, we would anticipate that perceived sociocultural pressure might act as an important cognitive mechanism mediating the association between media use and women’s tendencies to self-objectify and self-sexualize.

A third potential mediator may be women’s view of other women as sexual objects. Objectification theorists posit that women observe other women being objectified in society at large and in the media, and that they then turn this tendency to objectify upon themselves. Though explicitly stated in objectification theory, this process of turning the objectifying gaze onto the self has yet to be empirically tested. This dynamic is supported not only by objectification theory but also by cultivation theorists, who would posit that chronic media exposure cultivates a shared sense of social reality and social norms (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). Applying cultivation theory to sexualized media, it is possible that exposure to sexually objectified women in the media would cultivate a sense that women are sexual objects. This cultivated belief, particularly over time, might normalize the expectation that women objectify themselves. Prior work supports the potential role of this mediating variable, as different types of media exposure have demonstrated correlations with women’s tendency to endorse objectifying statements about women (Gordon, 2008; Hust & Lei, 2008), and with men’s tendency to objectify women (Ward, Vandenbosch, & Eggermont, 2015). Even preferences for certain types of media (e.g., hip hop music; explicit sexual content online) seem to cultivate a particular view of women as sex objects (ter Bogt, Engels, Bogers, & Kloosterman, 2010). Empirically testing how women’s thoughts about other women influence their own tendency to self-objectify and self-sexualize would shed light on the potential cognitive mechanisms undergirding the inconsistent media–body links in prior research.

The Current Study

Accordingly, the current study examined associations between media exposure and young women’s self-sexualization, operationalized as the extent to which they report monitoring their appearance, report enjoyment of sexualization by others, and report grounding their self-worth in their sexual appeal. By including these broader measures of self-sexualization as opposed to self-objectification alone, we hoped to better capture the complex ways in which media use is associated with young adult women’s beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors toward their own bodies (Ward et al., 2018; Ward et al., 2016). In addition, the current study examined whether the link between media use and self-sexualization is statistically mediated by internalization of the thin ideal, perceived pressure to achieve these ideals, and the view of other women as sexual objects. In doing so, we built upon prior theory and research supporting internalization of the thin ideal as a mechanism linking media exposure and women’s tendency to self-objectify and hoped to shed light on other potential cognitive mechanisms potentially undergirding this link. We chose to include a diverse set of media measures, including three genres of television, magazine consumption, and Facebook investment. By assessing facets of young women’s use of traditional media, print media, and social media, we hoped to better capture the breadth of young women’s modern media environment and to investigate whether different types of media demonstrate particular potency in their
connections to young women’s body image and objectification. We hypothesized that:

**Hypothesis 1:** Heavier exposure to each of the different types of media would be associated with higher self-reported internalization of the thin ideal, greater subjective feelings of pressure to conform to cultural beauty ideals, and stronger endorsement of the view that other women are sex objects.

**Hypothesis 2:** Higher belief that women are sexual objects, higher internalization of cultural beauty ideals, and higher perceived pressure to conform to these ideals would be associated with women’s self-reported self-sexualization (as assessed by their self-reported tendency to objectify, enjoyment of sexualization, and stronger grounding of their self-worth in their sex appeal).

In addition, this article examined whether associations between media use and self-sexualization are most accurately represented as direct relations or as indirect relations. Although the literature would suggest a mediated association may be most appropriate, these alternative models were compared, as they are founded on different theoretical assumptions about how media use relates to women’s tendency to self-sexualize. Support for a mediated model would highlight the role of several potential cognitive mechanisms in the self-objectification process.

**Method**

**Participants**

Participants were 663 undergraduate women aged 17 to 24 ($M = 18.65, SD = 0.98$) years. Regarding their ethnic/racial identification, 63.7% ($n = 422$) self-identified as White, 19.0% ($n = 126$) as Asian, 7.7% ($n = 51$) as Black or African American, 5.3% ($n = 35$) as Latina, 3% ($n = 20$) as Middle Eastern, 0.6% ($n = 4$) as Multiracial, 0.3% ($n = 2$) as Native American, and 0.2% ($n = 1$) as Other. An additional 0.3% ($n = 2$) of the sample did not report their race. Participants came from fairly well-educated backgrounds, reporting on average that both their mother and father had graduated from college ($M = 16.71$ years of schooling for mothers and $M = 17.17$ years of schooling for fathers).

Religiosity was assessed using three items, each scored on a 1 (not at all/never) to 5 (very religious/all the time) scale. Responses to the following three items were averaged: “How religious are you?” “How often do you go to religious services (like church or temple)?” and “How often do you pray?” The sample was moderately religious, with a mean score falling slightly above the midpoint ($M = 2.69, SD = 1.94$). Sexual experience was assessed with a single question, “How would you describe your current level of experience with dating and sexual relationships?” Response options ranged from 0 “just starting out (virgin)” to 10 “have had several sexual relationships.” Average sexual experience level for the current sample was 4.32, roughly corresponding to the response option “1-2 sexual partners (no longer a virgin).”

**Measures**

**Media exposure.** To examine magazine consumption, participants were asked to indicate how many issues per year (between 0 and 12) they read of the following 12 monthly women’s magazines: Allure, Cosmopolitan, Elle, Glamour, In Style, Marie Claire, Self, Seventeen, Shape, Vanity Fair, Vogue, and Women’s Health. This selection of magazines was chosen partly from past research (e.g., Ward et al., 2018) and partly because it includes lifestyle magazines, fashion magazines, and health and fitness magazines, which may better capture the breadth of women’s magazine exposure. A mean score was computed across the 12 magazines (Cronbach’s alpha = .73).

To assess consumption of situation comedies, we provided participants with a list of 24 situation comedy (sitcom) programs. These programs represented all sitcoms currently airing on primetime or syndication on major networks (ABC, CBS, NBC, FOX, TNT, TBS, and CW) in our market. Participants indicated how often they watched each sitcom using the following response options, scored 0 to 3: never; a little/a few episodes, sometimes/some episodes, and a lot/most or all episodes. A mean was calculated across the 24 programs.

To assess exposure to reality and drama exposure, we provided participants with a list of 36 popular lifestyle reality programs and 16 dramas (e.g., Real Housewives, The Bachelor, How to Get Away with Murder, Shameless) currently airing on network TV or basic cable networks (e.g., MTV, VH1, Bravo; NBC, Fox). These programs were chosen based on online rankings of popular programs (e.g., tv.com). As with situation comedies, participants reported how frequently they had ever viewed the 52 different programs using the following response options scored 0 to 3: a little/a few episodes, sometimes/some episodes, and a lot/most or all episodes. A mean across all 36 reality television programs and 16 dramas was calculated.

To assess Facebook investment, participants answered six items regarding their use of Facebook and its importance to their social life. This scale was adapted from the Facebook Intensity Scale (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007), with two items modified. Participants responded to the items on a 3-point scale, from disagree to agree. A sample item is “I feel like my social life would suffer if Facebook were shut down.” A mean score was computed, with higher scores reflecting greater Facebook investment. Cronbach’s alpha for the current sample was .80, slightly higher than the alpha reported in a prior study (Cronbach’s alpha = .76; Manago et al., 2015).

**Self-sexualization.** Following the work of Ward et al. (2016), self-sexualization was measured via three scales to capture
both traditional components of self-objectification, such as body surveillance, as well as components centered more on women’s prioritizing and valuing of their sexual appeal. The first scale included in the sexualization latent variable was the Surveillance subscale of the Objectified Body Consciousness Scale, which examined the extent to which individuals engage in regular body monitoring. Respondents indicated their level of agreement with each of eight items (e.g., “During the day, I think about how I look many times”) using a 6-point scale anchored by strongly disagree at 1 and strongly agree at 6. A mean score was computed such that higher scores indicate greater body surveillance. This scale was originally developed and validated among three samples of undergraduate women and their middle-aged mothers. Cronbach’s alpha for the surveillance subscale among the three samples was .89, .79, and .76, respectively. Similarly, Cronbach’s alpha for the current sample was .77.

The second scale included in the sexualization latent variable was the ESS (Liss et al., 2011), which measures the extent to which individuals attempt to and enjoy emphasizing their own sexiness. Participants indicated their agreement with eight items using a 6-point scale (1 = definitely disagree; 6 = definitely agree). Sample items include “I love to feel sexy” and “I like showing off my body.” Mean scores were computed such that higher scores indicate greater enjoyment of sexualization. The ESS was originally developed and validated among two predominantly White samples of undergraduate women. The scale demonstrated strong construct and discriminant validity. Cronbach’s alpha for the development and validation samples was .85 and .86, respectively. Cronbach’s alpha for the current sample was .88.

The third scale included in the sexualization latent variable was the SASW (Gordon & Ward, 2000), which assesses the extent to which participants base their self-worth on their sexual appeal. Participants were first given the prompt “How would you feel about yourself if . . . ” and were asked to indicate whether they would feel better or worse about themselves in 23 situations, 13 of which reflected their sexual appeal/attractiveness. Sample items include the following: “You were asked to be a model for a calendar featuring college students” and “A car accident left you with a permanent, two-inch scar on your face.” Responses were indicated using a 7-point scale anchored by −3 (“Ugh! I would feel really horrible about myself”) and +3 (“Wow! I would feel really great about myself”). Higher scores, based on absolute values, reflect placing a stronger emphasis on sexual appeal in perceptions of one’s self-worth. Cronbach’s alpha for the 13 items assessing sexual appeal self-worth was .81. This level of internal consistency is similar to or higher than in previous studies using this scale (Cronbach’s alpha = .70, .79, and .81, in Manago et al., 2015; Ward et al., 2018; Ward et al., 2016, respectively).

Potential mediators. To assess their views of other women as sex objects, participants completed an extended version of the Women are Sexual Objects Scale (Ward, 2002), which included 13 items scored on a 6-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Sample items include “Women who wear tight or revealing clothing are asking to be hit on by men” and “Girls should do whatever they need to (e.g., use make up, buy attractive clothes, work out) to look good enough to attract a date/partner.” Items were averaged (Cronbach’s alpha = .80) so that higher scores indicated a stronger endorsement of the belief that women are sex objects.

To assess women’s internalization of the thin ideal, participants responded to the nine items of the Internalization-General subscale of the Sociocultural Attitudes Toward Appearance Questionnaire (SATAQ-3; Thompson, van den Berg, Roehrig, Guarda, & Heinberg, 2004). Participants rated their agreement on a 6-point scale (1 = definitely disagree; 6 = definitely agree) to nine statements including “I compare my body to the bodies of people who are on TV” and “I wish I looked like the models in music videos.” Scores were averaged such that higher scores indicated a greater internalization of the thin ideal. Cronbach’s alpha for the current sample was .93.

To assess women’s feelings of pressure to look like media ideals, participants completed the seven items from the Pressure subscale of the SATAQ-3 (Thompson et al., 2004). Participants rated their agreement on a 6-point scale (1 = definitely disagree; 6 = definitely agree) to eight statements including “I’ve felt pressure from TV or magazines to diet” and “I’ve felt pressure from TV and magazines to be thin.” Responses to each item were averaged (Cronbach’s alpha = .92) such that higher scores indicated a greater perception of pressure from the media to conform to media ideals of beauty. Both subscales from the SATAQ-3 were developed among a sample of 175 undergraduate women (age range = 17-25 years) and validated among a sample of 195 undergraduate women (age range = 18-22 years). Cronbach’s alpha for the first sample was .96 for Internalization-General and .92 for Pressure. For the second sample, Cronbach’s alpha was .92 for Internalization-General and .94 for Pressure.

Procedure
Participants were recruited from an introductory psychology subject pool and received research participation credit in return for completing the survey. Students completed the survey in small groups no larger than 10 participants on tablets in an on-campus research lab. Participants were informed that the study was interested in examining their media use and beliefs about social relationships. Other measures were assessed, including measures related to participants’ sexual agency, gender beliefs, and mental health, but are not conceptually relevant to the research questions under examination here. It took approximately 45 min to complete the full packet of measures.

Results
Descriptive Statistics
Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and zero-order inter-correlations for the key variables in the study.
Taking into consideration the skewness of the media variables, we conducted Spearman’s correlation test, which is recommended for data with tailed distributions and outliers (de Winter, Goslin, & Potter, 2016). The three self-sexualization measures (body surveillance, sex appeal self-worth, and enjoyment of sexualization) were moderately to strongly correlated, with correlations ranging from .42 to .53. These moderate-to-strong correlations suggest both conceptual overlap and conceptual distinction of these constructs in line with the aforementioned prior research. Concerning the three mediators and three self-sexualization measures, the strongest correlations were between internalization of the thin ideal and pressure. A discriminant validity test, which assesses the extent to which a latent variable is distinct from other latent variables in the model, showed that there might be some conceptual overlap between these constructs (i.e., the square root of average variance extracted [AVE] in internalization was equal to its correlation with pressure). This overlap is likely due to the fact that both are subscales of the SATAQ-3. In the next step, we checked for vertical collinearity (i.e., collinearity between the mediating variables). We retrieved tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF) values that take into consideration only the effects of these variables on themselves (Kock & Lynn, 2012). These values did not exceed 0.2 for tolerance and 4 for VIF, indicating no multicollinearity issues between these variables and their indicator items (Kline, 1998).

### Testing the Hypothesized Model

The integrative model was tested with structural equation modeling (AMOS) using the maximum likelihood method. The model controlled for age and sexual experience by employing these variables as predictors for all of the hypothesized endogenous variables. First, multiple imputation was performed as the bootstrapping method does not allow the sample to include missing data. Overall, 148 respondents (22.2%) had missing data; 84 of those respondents had only one missing value that had to be imputed. All variables had less than 5% missing data. According to skewness and kurtosis information, all variables, except for magazine exposure, were normally distributed on a univariate level (i.e., skewness values did not exceed 2 and kurtosis values did not exceed 7; J. Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003). However, Mardia’s coefficient for the data was 36.57 with a critical ratio value of 16.67, indicating that the data were significantly non-normal on a multivariate level. To resolve this issue, we decided to perform bootstrapping in AMOS, which is an adequate way to deal with non-normal data in structural equation modeling (Nevitt & Hancock, 2001).

First, a measurement model was tested assessing the fit of the self-sexualization latent variable. The media variables and mediators (i.e., internalization, perceived pressure, and objectification of women) were measured with observed variables (i.e., total scale score). Self-sexualization was measured as a second-order latent variable comprising the enjoyment of sexualization, body surveillance, and appearance self-worth. Indicators for the three first-order measures were first assigned to parcels using the item-to-construct balance technique (Little et al., 2002). Specifically, a principal components analysis was performed for each scale (separately). SPSS was asked to extract one factor for each scale, and items were assigned to three parcels based on their factor loadings. The three highest factor loadings were distributed across the three parcels followed by the next three highest factor loadings until all items were assigned to one of the three parcels. The measurement model showed a good fit of the data, $\chi^2(24) = 84.244$, $p < .001$, root mean square error.
of approximation (RMSEA) = .062, comparative fit index (CFI) = .982.

Second, the hypothesized structural model was tested and showed an adequate fit of the data (Figure 1). The model yielded a chi-square value of 363.633 with 110 degrees of freedom, \( p < .001 \), RMSEA = .059, CFI = .946, and \( \chi^2/df = 3.306 \). The results indicated that 7.7% of the variance of internalization of appearance ideals, 7.1% of the variance of pressure to conform to media ideals, and 4.3% of the view of women as sex objects were explained by media exposure. Moreover, 58.5% of the variance of self-sexualization could be explained by media exposure, internalization of appearance ideals, pressure, and objectification of women.

Magazine exposure was only marginally significantly related to the objectification of women, but was significantly related to pressure, and internalization of appearance ideals. Both sitcom exposure and reality TV exposure were significantly related to the view of women as sex objects, pressure to conform to media ideals, and thin-ideal internalization. Interestingly, drama program exposure was unrelated to all three proposed mediators. Finally, Facebook investment was unrelated to the view of women as sex objects.

User-defined estimands were created to examine the indirect effects. The relative contribution of each mediator (i.e., internalization, perceived pressure, and objectification of women) to the indirect relation between media exposure and self-sexualization is presented in Table 2. Both magazine exposure and Facebook investment had a significant indirect effect on self-sexualization through internalization of appearance ideals, whereas reality television use had a significant indirect effect on self-sexualization through both internalization of appearance ideals and through cultivating the view of women as sex objects. These results indicate that the strongest mediation was through internalization.

Alternative model. To better understand the role of mediators in the relation between media exposure and self-sexualization, we also tested a model that did not include the three mediators (see Figure 2). This model also showed an adequate fit, \( \chi^2 (80) = 215.03, p < .001 \), RMSEA = .051, CFI = .964, \( \chi^2/df = 2.689 \); subsequently, we performed a nested model comparison test. An unconstrained model (i.e., a model in which the relation between the media variables and self-sexualization was mediated by internalization, perceived pressure, and objectification of women) was compared with a constrained model (i.e., a model in which the paths between the media variables, the mediators, and self-sexualization were set to zero and thus not estimated). This chi-square difference test showed that the model involving the mediators had a significantly better fit (\( \Delta \chi^2 = 326.795, p < .001, df = 18 \)).

Discussion

The current study investigated associations between diverse forms of media and women’s tendency to self-sexualize. We extended prior research by including an array of media
measures (three genres of television, magazines, and social media), while also including broader measures of self-sexualization. The current study also examined the role of three potential mediating mechanisms: internalization of the thin ideal, perceived sociocultural pressure to conform to the thin ideal, and the view of women as sex objects. Results demonstrate that women who reported more engagement with magazines and investment in Facebook also reported higher internalization of the thin ideal and greater perceived pressure to conform to the thin ideal. Women who report greater exposure to reality television also reported higher internalization of the thin ideal, higher perceived pressure to conform to the thin ideal, and higher endorsement of the view of women as sex objects compared with women who reported lower levels of reality television exposure. Greater sitcom exposure was also related to greater internalization of the thin ideal and pressure to conform to the thin ideal, but was related to lower endorsement of the view of women as sex objects. Dramas were not associated with any of the mediators examined. Of these varied media sources, magazines and Facebook investment were indirectly related to self-sexualization through internalization of the thin ideal, whereas reality television was indirectly related to self-sexualization through internalization of the thin ideal and the view of women as sex objects. In turn, the view of women as sex objects significantly related to self-sexualization, as did internalization of appearance ideals; perceived pressure did not.

Our findings contribute to the existing body of research in several meaningful ways. First, prior studies examining links between media use and women’s tendency to self-sexualize have generally examined traditional or social media separately and have not considered how women may be uniquely invested with social media. Second, past research has often examined self-objectification without consideration of other components of women’s bodily experiences in the world. By focusing on women’s tendency to self-sexualize more broadly rather than their tendency to self-objectify alone, we advance the understanding of how sexualized depictions of women in the media are associated with women’s self-reported view of their own bodies and sense of self. Third, by including more
diverse measures of women’s everyday media use and a broader assessment of self-sexualization, which includes both behavioral and cognitive components, we may more accurately capture how media use may contribute to women’s experiences of their bodies. Finally, the inclusion of several potential mediators in our model contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the cognitive processes that may undergird women’s tendencies to self-sexualize. Although examining direct links between media exposure and self-objectification or self-sexualization has merit, examining potential mediators provides insight into the mechanisms through which exposure to sexualized bodies in the media may influence women’s view of their own bodies.

In our results, heavier media consumption most consistently predicted thin-ideal internalization and perceived sociocultural pressure, as all media measures except for exposure to television dramas significantly predicted these mediators. In contrast, only sitcoms and reality television cultivated a more general view of women as sex objects. It may be that the valuing of thin bodies and pressure to conform to those ideals are nearly omnipresent in media, but that viewers are more susceptible to the specific view that women are sex objects when the women being presented as sex objects are perceived to be more “real,” as in reality television, but are less susceptible to the view of women as sex objects when this objectification occurs in the context of comedy.

It is surprising that dramas did not emerge as a significant predictor of any of the proposed mediators. One potential explanation for these null findings is that some dramas may actually contain less sexually objectifying content than other TV genres, or that consumption of certain programs (e.g., Law & Order: SVU) may actually cultivate women’s sense of empowerment (Hust, Marett, Lei, Ren, & Ran, 2015; Kim et al., 2007). For example, women in Hust et al.’s (2015) study who frequently watched Law & Order: SVU reported increased intentions to request consent in their sexual encounters and endorsed rape myths less strongly than those who reported less frequent viewing of Law & Order: SVU. This work also highlights another potential explanation of these null results, which is that different programs in the same genre (Law & Order: SVU versus NCIS) may have opposing effects on participants’ beliefs. Some programs may serve to empower women and to diminish their view of themselves as sexual objects, whereas other programs may serve to promote and reinforce these messages.

Concerning indirect effects, both magazines and Facebook investment acted indirectly on women’s tendency to self-sexualize through internalization of the thin ideal, whereas reality television operated through internalization of the thin ideal and the view of women as sex objects to influence women’s tendency to self-sexualize. The associations between different types of media use and internalization of the thin ideal are consistent with Vandenbosch and Eggermont’s (2012) three-step process of self-objectification. There were no indirect associations between sitcoms or dramas and self-sexualization through any of the mediators, which is also similar to Vandenbosch and Eggermont’s

---

**Figure 2.** Structural equation model (N = 663) for the associations between media use (i.e., Facebook investment, reality television, dramas, sitcoms, and magazines) and self-sexualization.

*Note.* — Only significant paths are shown (‘*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001). Values reflect standardized coefficients.*
(2012) model, which found no link between primetime television and internalization of the thin ideal. Although these results are not as consistent as expected, they do support the need for future work to clarify the relation of these mediators in women’s self-sexualization tendencies, as well as other potential mediators.

Limitations, Future Directions, and Conclusions

Although the current study had several strengths, it also had several limitations. The sample in the current study was relatively homogeneous, comprising primarily White young adult women from educated backgrounds. In addition, the correlational nature of this work means we are unable to make causal claims about the associations observed in our model; it may be that having a strong tendency to self-sexualize leads women to select particular media to consume that validate these tendencies. Finally, although we included assessments of both traditional and social media, the media assessed in this study may not accurately represent women’s full media diets. In the time since data collection was completed, several other social media platforms have risen in popularity. In addition, these new social media platforms may have an even greater influence on women’s tendency to self-objectify or to self-sexualize, as they are image- rather than text-based (e.g., Instagram). Though content analyses do support that even more text-based SNS contain objectified content (e.g., through profile pictures), image-based platforms are environments potentially ripe with sexualized self-representations.

Future studies should address these limitations by testing this mediated model in a more diverse sample of women (with regard to age and racial composition), by using longitudinal data to verify the directionality of the proposed model, and by including even more diverse media measures (e.g., exposure to music genres, movies, or music videos; other forms of social media). In addition, future work could also expand on the current model by examining other mediators and moderators. For example, future work could examine the role of different gender ideologies or endorsement of sexual scripts as potential mediators in this media–body association. Although common in multivariate analyses (e.g., Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2009; Kock & Lynn, 2012), the Internalization and Pressure scales—both derived from the SATAQ 3—were highly correlated but not collinear. High correlations between subscales could suggest that participants may not actually differentiate between constructs that researchers theoretically consider to be distinct (Hyde, 1998) and should, therefore, be handled cautiously in future studies. In the realm of moderators, perceived realism, identification with characters in the media, and motives for viewing, has each been implicated in prior work examining media effects (e.g., Gordon, 2008; Ward & Carlson, 2013). Women who perceive television content as being highly realistic, who identify strongly with characters in the media, or who use media to learn about how the world operates may be particularly prone to self-sexualize themselves, as they view media as a more appropriate model on which to base their own behaviors.

The results of the current study have several implications for the lives of women. These results suggest that chronic exposure to various types of media may influence women’s beliefs both about themselves (i.e., internalization of the thin ideal and perceived pressure to conform to this ideal) and about other women (i.e., the view of other women as sex objects). Taken together, these findings highlight how exposure to sexualized portrayals of women in the media is linked with the ways in which women act to feel worthy. The reduction in women’s value to aspects of the self that are external, to the exclusion of other aspects of the self, by definition precludes women the possibility of navigating the social world as agents. The current study builds our understanding of the cognitive processes underlying media’s associations with women’s self-sexualization tendencies by identifying several potential mechanisms. Accordingly, these findings may prove useful for developing media literacy programs or other interventions targeting these mechanisms, intervening both prior to and in the process of women’s problematic cognitions before they manifest in the form of reduction via self-sexualization.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Note

1. In multiple imputation, each missing value is replaced by a simulated value and m plausible alternative versions of the complete dataset are generated. In our study, nine new datasets were generated and we tested our hypothesized model with each dataset. These analyses did not significantly differ and the model that is reported in the article was analyzed with the first dataset that was obtained from the MI method.

ORCID iD

Petal Grower https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0434-7645

References

American Psychological Association. (2007). Report of the APA task force on the sexualization of girls. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from http://www.apa.org/pi/%20women/programs/girls/report.aspx

Aubrey, J. S. (2006a). Effects of sexually objectifying media on self-objectification and body surveillance in undergraduates: Results of a 2-year panel study. Journal of Communication, 56, 366-386. doi:10.1111/jcom.2006.56.issue-2
Aubrey, J. S. (2006b). Exposure to sexually objectifying media and body self-perceptions among college women: An examination of the selective exposure hypothesis and the role of moderating variables. *Sex Roles, 55*, 159-172. doi:10.1007/s11199-006-9070-7

Aubrey, J. S. (2007). The impact of sexually objectifying media exposure on negative body emotions and sexual self-perceptions: Investigating the mediating role of body self-consciousness. *Mass Communication and Society, 10*, 1-23. doi:10.1080/15205430709337002

Aubrey, J. S., & Frisby, C. M. (2011). Sexual objectification in music videos: A content analysis comparing gender and genre. *Mass Communication and Society, 14*, 475-501. doi:10.1080/15205436.2010.513468

Cohen, J., Cohen, P., West, S. G., & Aiken, L. S. (2003). *Applied multiple regression/correlation analysis for the behavioral sciences* (3rd ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Cohen, R., Newton-John, T., & Slater, A. (2017). The relationship between Facebook and Instagram appearance-focused activities and body image concerns in young women. *Body Image, 23*, 183-187. doi:10.1016/j.bodyim.2017.10.002

Common Sense Media. (2018). *Social media, social life: Teens reveal their experiences*. Retrieved from https://www.commonsensemedia.org/research/social-media-social-life-2018

de Vries, D. A., & Peter, J. (2013). Women on display: The effect of portraying the self online on women’s self-objectification. *Computers in Human Behavior, 29*, 1483-1489. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2013.01.015

de Winter, J. C. F., Gosling, S. D., & Potter, J. (2016). Comparing the Pearson and Spearman correlation coefficients across distributions and sample sizes: A tutorial using simulations and empirical data. *Psychological Methods, 21*, 273-290. doi:10.1037/met0000079

Duggan, M., Ellison, N., Lampe, C., Lenhart, A., & Madden, M. (2015). *Demographics of key social networking platforms*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center.

Ellison, N. B., Steinfield, C., & Lampe, C. (2007). The benefits of Facebook “friends”: Social capital and college students’ use of online social network sites. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 12*, 1143-1168. doi:10.1111/j.1083-6100.2007.00367.x

Fardouly, J., Diedrichs, P. C., Vartanian, L. R., & Halliwell, E. (2015). The mediating role of appearance comparisons in the relationship between media usage and self-objectification in young women. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 39*, 447-457. doi:10.1177/0361684315581841

Fardouly, J., & Vartanian, L. R. (2015). Negative comparisons about one’s appearance mediate the relationship between Facebook usage and body image concerns. *Body Image, 12*, 82-88. doi:10.1016/j.bodyim.2014.10.004

Flynn, M. A., Park, S. Y., Morin, D. T., & Stana, A. (2015). Anything but real: Body idealization and objectification of MTV docuseries characters. *Sex Roles, 72*, 173-182. doi:10.1007/s11199-015-0464-2

Fredrickson, B. L., & Roberts, T. A. (1997). Objectification theory: Toward understanding women’s lived experiences and mental health risks. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 21*, 173-206. doi:10.1111/j.1471-6402.1997.tb00108.x

Gerbner, G., & Gross, L. (1976). Living with television: The violence profile. *Journal of Communication, 26*, 172-194. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.1976.tb01397.x

Gordon, M. K. (2008). Media contributions to African American girls’ focus on beauty and appearance: Exploring the consequences of sexual objectification. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 32*, 245-256. doi:10.1111/j.1471-6402.2008.00433.x

Hust, S., & Lei, M. (2008). Sexual objectification, sports programming, and music television. *Media Report to Women, 36*, 16-23.

Hust, S. J., Maret, E. G., Lei, M., Ren, C., & Ran, W. (2015). Law & Order, CSI, and NCIS: The association between exposure to crime drama franchises, rape myth acceptance, and sexual consent negotiation among college students. *Journal of Health Communication, 20*(12), 1369-1381. doi:10.1080/10810730.2015.1018615

Hyde, S. (1998). Measuring feminist attitudes: A possible rapprochement between feminist theory and empirical data? *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 22*, 361-362.

Kim, J. L., Sorsoli, C. L., Collins, K., Zylbergold, B. A., Schooler, D., & Tolman, D. A. (2007). From sex to sexuality: Exposing the hetero- sexual script on primetime television network. *Journal of Sex Research, 44*, 145-157. doi:10.1080/00224490701263660

Kline, R. B. (1998). *Principles and practice of structural equation modeling*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Knauss, C., Paxton, S. J., & Alsaker, F. D. (2008). Body dissatisfaction in adolescent boys and girls: Objectified body consciousness, internalization of the media body ideal and perceived pressure from media. *Sex Roles, 59*, 633-643. doi:10.1007/s11199-008-9474-7

Kock, N., & Lynn, G. S. (2012). Lateral collinearity and misleading results in variance-based SEM: An illustration and recommendations. *Journal of the Association for Information Systems, 13*, 546-580.

Lenhart, A. (2015). *Teens, social media, and technology overview*. 2015. Washington, DC: Pew Internet.

Liss, M., Erchull, M. J., & Ramsey, L. R. (2015). Empowering or oppressing? Development and exploration of the enjoyment of sexualization scale. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 37*, 57-68. doi:10.1177/0146167210386119

Little, T. D., Cunningham, W. A., Shahar, G., & Widaman, K. F. (2002). To parcel or not to parcel: Exploring the question, weighing the merits. *Structural Equation Modeling, 9*, 151-173. doi:10.1207/S15328007SEM0902_1

Manago, A. M., Ward, L. M., Lemm, K. M., Reed, L., & Seabrook, R. (2015). Facebook involvement, objectified body consciousness, body shame, and sexual assertiveness in college women and men. *Sex Roles, 72*, 1-14. doi:10.1007/s11199-014-0441-1
McKinley, N. M., & Hyde, J. S. (1996). The objectified body consciousness scale development and validation. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 20*, 181-215. doi:10.1111/j.1471-6402.1996.tb00467.x

Meier, E. P., & Gray, J. (2014). Facebook photo activity associated with body image disturbance in adolescent girls. *Cybersychology, Behavior, and Social Networking, 17*, 199-206. doi:10.1089/cyber.2013.0305

Messineo, M. J. (2008). Does advertising on black entertainment television portray more positive gender representations compared to broadcast networks? *Sex Roles, 59*, 752-764. doi:10.1007/s11199-008-9470-y

Mingoa, J., Hutchinson, A. D., Wilson, C., & Gleaves, D. C. (2017). The relationship between social networking site use and the internalization of a thin ideal in females: A meta-analytic review. *Frontiers in Psychology, 8*, Article 1351. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2017.01351

Moradi, B., & Huang, Y. P. (2008). Objectification theory and psychological modeling. *Production of Woman Quarterly, 32*, 377-398. doi:10.1111/j.1471-6402.2008.00452.x

Morry, M. M., & Staska, S. L. (2001). Magazine exposure: Internalization, self-objectification, eating attitudes, and body satisfaction in male and female university students. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science, 33*, 269-279. doi:10.1037/h0087148

Myers, T. A., & Crowther, J. H. (2007). Sociocultural pressures, thin-ideal internalization, self-objectification, and body dissatisfaction: Could feminist beliefs be a moderating factor? *Body Image, 4*, 296-308. doi:10.1016/j.bodyim.2007.04.001

Nevitt, J., & Hancock, G. R. (2001). Performance of bootstrapping approaches to model test statistics and parameter standard error estimation in structural equation modeling. *Structural Equation Modeling, 8*, 353-377. doi:10.1207/S15328007SEM0803_2

Noll, S. M., & Fredrickson, B. L. (1998). A mediational model linking self-objectification, body shame, and disordered eating. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 22*, 623-636. doi:10.1111/j.1471-6402.1998.tb00181.x

Nowatzki, J., & Morry, M. (2009). Women’s intentions regarding, and acceptance of, self-sexualizing behavior. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 33*, 95-107. doi:10.1111/j.1471-6402.2008.01477.x

Perloff, R. M. (2014). Social media effects on young women’s body image concerns: Theoretical perspectives and an agenda for research. *Sex Roles, 71*, 363-377. doi:10.1007/s11199-014-0384-6

Rideout, V. J., Foehr, U. G., & Roberts, D. F. (2010). *Generation M 2: Media in the lives of 8- to 18-year-olds*. Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation. Retrieved from https://www.kff.org/other.

Rousseau, A., Beyens, I., Eggermont, S., & Vandenbosch, L. (2017). The dual role of media internalization in adolescent sexual behavior. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 46*, 1685-1697. doi:10.1007/s10508-016-0902-4

Salomon, I., & Brown, C. S. (2019). The selfie generation: Examining the relationship between social media use and early adolescent body image. *The Journal of Early Adolescence, 39*, 539-560. doi:10.1177/0272431618770809

Saunders, J. F., & Eaton, A. A. (2018). Snaps, selfies, and shares: How three popular social media platforms contribute to the sociocultural model of disordered eating among young women. *Cybersychology, Behavior, and Social Networking, 21*, 343-354. doi:10.1089/cyber.2017.0713

Slater, A., & Tiggemann, M. (2015). Media exposure, extracurricular activities, and appearance-related comments as predictors of female adolescents’ self-objectification. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 39*, 375-389. doi:10.1177/0361684314554606

Smith, S. L., Choueiti, M., Prescott, A., & Pieper, K. (2012). Gender roles & occupations: A look at character attributes and job-related aspirations in film and television. Geena David Institute on Gender in Media. Retrieved from https://seejane.org/wp-content/uploads/key-findings-gender-roles-2013.pdf

Stice, E. (2002). Risk and maintenance factors for eating pathology: A meta-analytic review. *Psychological Bulletin, 128*, 825-848. doi:10.1037//0033-2909.128.5.825

Stice, E., & Whitenton, K. (2002). Risk factors for body dissatisfaction in adolescent girls: A longitudinal investigation. *Developmental Psychology, 38*, 669-678. doi:10.1037//0012-1649.38.5.669

Vandereycken, T. F., Engels, R. C., Bogers, S., & Kloosterman, M. (2010). “Shake it baby, shake it”: Media preferences, sexual attitudes and gender stereotypes among adolescents. *Sex Roles, 63*, 844-859. doi:10.1007/s11199-010-9815-1

Thompson, J. K., & Stice, E. (2001). Thin-ideal internalization: Mounting evidence for a new risk factor for body image disturbance and eating pathology. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 10*, 181-183. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8721.2001.00144

Thompson, J. K., van den Berg, P., Roehrig, M., Guarda, N. S., & Heinberg, L. J. (2004). The Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Scale-3 (SATAQ-3): Development and validation. *International Journal of Eating Disorders, 35*, 293-304. doi:10.1002/eat.10257

Tigge, M., & Slater, A. (2014). NetTweens: The internet and body image concerns in preteenage girls. *The Journal of Early Adolescence, 34*, 606-620. doi:10.1177/0272431613501083

Tigge, M., & Slater, A. (2015). The role of self-objectification in the mental health of early adolescent girls: Predictors and consequences. *Journal of Pediatric Psychology, 40*, 704-711. doi:10.1093/jpepsy/jsv021

Tigge, M., & Slater, A. (2017). Facebook and body image concern in adolescent girls: A prospective study. *International Journal of Eating Disorders, 50*, 80-83. doi:10.1002/eat.22640

Trekels, J., Ward, L. M., & Eggermont, S. (2018). I “like” the way you look: How appearance-focused and overall Facebook use contribute to adolescents’ self-sexualization. *Computers in Human Behavior, 81*, 198-208. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2017.12.020

Turner, J. S. (2011). Sex and the spectacle of music videos: An examination of the portrayal of race and sexuality in music videos. *Sex Roles, 64*, 173-191. doi:10.1007/s11199-010-9766-6

Tylka, T. L., & Hill, M. S. (2004). Objectification theory as it relates to disordered eating among college women. *Sex Roles, 51*, 719-730. doi:10.1007/s11199-004-0721-2

Vandenbosch, L., & Eggermont, S. (2012). Understanding sexual objectification: A comprehensive approach toward media exposure and girls’ internalization of beauty ideals, self-objectification, and body surveillance. *Journal of Communication, 62*, 869-887. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.2012.01667.x

Vandenbosch, L., & Eggermont, S. (2015). The role of mass media in adolescents’ sexual behaviors: Exploring the explanatory value of the three-step self-objectification process. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 44*, 729-742. doi:10.1007/s10508-014-0292-4

Vandenbosch, L., Muise, A., Eggermont, S., & Impett, E. A. (2015). Sexualizing reality television: Associations with trait and state
self-objectification. *Body Image, 13*, 62-66. doi:10.1016/j.bodyim.2015.01.003

Ward, L. M. (2002). Does television exposure affect emerging adults’ attitudes and assumptions about sexual relationships? Correlational and experimental confirmation. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 31*, 1-15. doi:10.1023/A:1014068031532

Ward, L. M. (2016). Media and sexualization: State of empirical research from 1995-2015. *Journal of Sex Research, 53*, 560-577.

Ward, L. M., & Carlson, C. (2013). Modeling meanness: Associations between reality TV consumption, perceived realism, and adolescents’ social aggression. *Media Psychology, 16*, 371-389. doi:10.1080/15213269.2013.832627

Ward, L. M., Seabrook, R., Giaccardi, S., & Zuo, A. (2015). Television uses and effects in emerging adulthood. In J. Arnett (Ed.), *Oxford handbook of emerging adulthood* (pp. 364-381). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Ward, L. M., Seabrook, R. C., Grower, P., Giaccardi, S., & Lippman, J. R. (2018). Sexual object or sexual subject: Media use, self-sexualization, and sexual agency among undergraduate women. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 42*, 29-43. doi:10.1177/0361684317737940

Ward, L. M., Seabrook, R. C., Manago, A., & Reed, L. (2016). Contributions of diverse media to self-sexualization among undergraduate women and men. *Sex Roles, 74*, 12-23. doi:10.1007/s11199-015-0548-z

Ward, L. M., Vandenbosch, L., & Eggermont, S. (2015). The impact of men’s magazines on adolescent boys’ objectification and courtship beliefs. *Journal of Adolescence, 39*, 49-58.

Zurbriggen, E. L., Ramsey, L. R., & Jaworski, B. K. (2011). Self-and partner-objectification in romantic relationships: Associations with media consumption and relationship satisfaction. *Sex Roles, 64*, 449-462. doi:10.1007/s11199-011-9933-4

Author Biographies

Petal Grower is a developmental psychology PhD candidate at the University of Michigan. Her research focuses on the impact of self-objectification and self-sexualization on women’s sexual agency. She is also interested in the conceptualization and measurement of these constructs.

L. Monique Ward is a professor of Psychology at the University of Michigan. Her research examines media contributions to gender and sexual socialization, with particular emphasis on the impact of sexually objectifying media content.

Jolien Trekels is a post-doctoral researcher at the School for Mass Communication at the KU Leuven. Her research interests include media use during adolescence and its influence on perceptions and behaviors, with a particular focus on body image.