

# Self-Objectification and It's Effect on Adolescent Girls' Contraceptive Use

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## Why study teen girls' contraceptive use?

- ◆ Despite a one-third decline in teen pregnancy and birth rates since the early 1990s, the teen pregnancy rate in the United States is *still the highest among developed nations*.
- ◆ In Montana in 2008, there were 1,680 teen pregnancies or a rate of 51.6 per 1,000 girls aged 15-19.
- ◆ The rate of teen pregnancy in Montana *increased 7%* between 2007 and 2008.

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## Objectification Theory

- ◆ Fredrick and Roberts (1997) proposed objectification theory as an integrative framework for understanding how women's socialization and experiences of sexual objectification are translated into mental health problems.

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## Sexual Objectification

- ◆ Occurs when women's sexual parts or functions are separated out from her person, reduced to status of mere instruments, or else regarded as if they were capable of representing her.

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## Self-Objectification

- ◆ The internalization of girls' perspective upon their own bodies is termed self-objectification.
- ◆ Manifested by persistent body surveillance or habitual monitoring of their body's outward appearance.

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## Objectification Theory Framework

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    graph LR
      A[Sexual objectification experiences] --> B[Self-objectification, manifested as body surveillance]
      B --> C1[Greater body shame]
      B --> C2[Greater anxiety]
      B --> C3[Reduced flow experiences]
      B --> C4[Lower internal body awareness]
      C1 --> D1[Eating disorders]
      C1 --> D2[Depression]
      C1 --> D3[Sexual dysfunction]
      C2 --> D1
      C2 --> D2
      C2 --> D3
      C3 --> D1
      C3 --> D2
      C3 --> D3
      C4 --> D1
      C4 --> D2
      C4 --> D3
  
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Fig. 1. Objectification theory framework.

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### What does self-objectification have to do with teen pregnancy?

- ◆ A study done in 2006 by Impett, Schooler, & Tolman found that self-objectification was correlated negatively with amount of sexual experience, sense of efficacy to act upon one's own sexual needs, and condom use.

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### Self-objectification & Its Effect on Contraceptive Use in Adolescent Girls

- ◆ Hypothesis: Adolescent girls who self-objectify are less likely to use contraceptives.
- ◆ Self-objectification could play a role in the recent rise in teen pregnancy in Montana.

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## Methods

- ◆ Sample: 40 adolescent girls aged 15-to-19 years old will be surveyed.
- ◆ 20 girls of this sample are not pregnant or parenting teens
- ◆ 20 girls of this sample are pregnant or parenting
- ◆ Sample was selected from various organizations in Gallatin and Park Counties that work with adolescent girls.

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## Methods cont.

- ◆ Participants completed a survey that measured objectified body consciousness, sexual activity, sexual self-efficacy, and protective behavior.
- ◆ Survey consisted of 58 questions, including demographic questions.
- ◆ All questions were cited from previous research.

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## Objectified Body Consciousness Scale McKinley and Hyde 1996

- ◆ 24 questions scaled from 1 to 5.
- ◆ 1=Not at all true of me    5=Completely true of me
- ◆ "When I can't control my weight, I feel like something must be wrong with me"

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## Sexual Experience

- ◆ 6 questions answered by circling YES or NO.
- ◆ “I have kissed someone or been kissed on the mouth”
- ◆ “I have performed oral sex”
- ◆ “I have received oral sex”

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## Contraceptive Self-Efficacy – Levison 1986

- ◆ 18 questions scaled from 1 to 5.
- ◆ 1=Not at all true of me    5= Completely true of me
- ◆ “When I am with a partner, I feel that I can always be responsible for what happens sexually with him”.

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## Protective Behavior

- ◆ Asked how often they used protection to prevent pregnancy.
- ◆ Asked how often they used protection to prevent STI's
- ◆ Asked if they had used various forms of protection the **first** time they had sexual intercourse
- ◆ Asked if they had used various forms of protection the **last** time they had sexual intercourse.

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## Implications of Research Outcomes

- ◆ Create and implement programs that promote positive body images and empower adolescent girls
- ◆ Provide education on body shame and body issues in girls before they reach teen years.
- ◆ Create/encourage more programs like Big Brothers Big Sisters, Girls Scouts, Big Sky Youth Empowerment, and other mentoring services.

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