

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.



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.

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.

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.

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.

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"

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”

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”.

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.

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.
