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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Contributions of Diverse Media to Self-Sexualization among Undergraduate Women and Men

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Abstract Although everyday exposure to media content that sexually objectifies women is believed to lead women to sexualize themselves, research testing this connection has produced mixed results. Most studies have focused only on the self-objectification component of self-sexualization, and on limited assessments of media exposure. Our goal was to extend tests of this component of objectification theory both to understudied media genres and to men, and to do so using broader measures of self-sexualization. Surveying 1,107 U.S. undergraduate students (658 women and 449 men), we used structural equation modeling to test the contributions of exposure to popular reality programs, romantic-themed movies, and music videos to self-sexualization (a latent construct comprised of body surveillance, enjoyment of sexualization, and importance of sexual appeal). Frequent consumption of reality TV programs consistently predicted self-sexualization for women and men, and music video exposure predicted self-sexualization only for men. Findings confirm pathways proposed by objectification theory and indicate unique contributions of understudied media.

Keywords Sexualization · Media effects · Self-objectification · Body surveillance

Introduction

The APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls (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; a person is held to a standard that equates physical attractiveness (narrowly defined) with being sexy; 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). One of the prominent sources of sexualization is the mainstream media. Analyses of U.S. media indicate that sexually objectifying portrayals of women appear in 71 % of music videos (Frisby and Aubrey 2012), among 45.5 % of young adult female characters on prime-time TV (Smith et al. 2012), and in 22 % of TV commercials featuring women (Messineo 2008). Verbal references to women's bodies and sexual appearance are also common in U.S. media (Kim et al. 2007; Montemurro 2003). Given that emerging adults in the U.S. (those aged 18–25) spend an average of 12 h per day using media (Coyne et al. 2013), exposure to these portrayals is virtually unavoidable (Fredrickson and Roberts 1997).

How does everyday exposure to this content affect women? According to objectification theory (Fredrickson and Roberts 1997), the pervasiveness of sexual objectification in society gradually socializes women to internalize this perspective of themselves, known as *self-objectification (SO)*. This term means that women gradually come to view themselves as sexual objects to be valued mainly for their bodily appearance and sexual appeal. SO has typically been measured via either the Surveillance Subscale of the Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (McKinley and Hyde 1996), which assesses body surveillance and body monitoring, or via the Trait Self-Objectification Questionnaire (SOQ) developed by Noll and Fredrickson (1998). The expectation is that the media's constant focus on and valuing of women's appearance and sexual appeal lead viewers to believe that *these* are their most important and valuable attributes, over other domains, including physical competencies and personality (e.g., intelligence, warmth; Grabe and Hyde 2009; Vandenbosch and Eggermont

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2012). In turn, internalizing an objectifying perspective toward one's body and self is believed to lead to diminished mental and sexual health (Fredrickson and Roberts 1997; McKinley and Hyde 1996).

Although numerous studies have tested the psychological consequences of SO (Moradi and Huang 2008), fewer have focused on factors that predict it. Concerning the media's role as a predictor, most studies have been experimental (e.g., Johnson and Gurung 2011). We uncovered only 13 studies that tested direct connections between *everyday* media exposure and SO among women in Western countries (who often share media) – seven conducted in the U.S., three in Belgium, two in Australia, and one in the UK. This number is substantially smaller than the body of work testing links between media and aggression, for example (410 survey effects as of 1990; Paik and Comstock 1994), or between media and body dissatisfaction/disordered eating beliefs (44 survey studies; Grabe et al. 2008). Moreover, the results within these 13 studies, described in Table 1, are not consistently strong. Of the 30 connections tested between everyday media exposure and SO, only 15 (50 %) were significant in the final models. Some analyses did find that frequent exposure to sexually objectifying ***TV content*** is linked to higher trait SO (Aubrey 2006a; Vandenbosch et al. 2015) or higher body surveillance (Aubrey 2007; Grabe and Hyde 2009). Others found significant associations for sexually objectifying ***media***, which included TV programs and other media (Aubrey 2006b; Nowatzki and Morry 2009). Finally, some report significant associations between ***magazine*** exposure and women's SO (Aubrey 2007; Fardouly et al. 2015; Morry and Staska 2001; Slater and Tiggemann 2014; Vandenbosch and Eggermont 2012; Zurbriggen et al. 2011). These patterns support expectations of objectification theory.

At the same time, several analyses found ***no*** significant associations between TV exposure and body surveillance (Aubrey 2006a; Slater and Tiggemann 2014; Tiggemann and Slater 2015) or trait SO (Aubrey 2007; Fardouly et al. 2015; Slater and Tiggemann 2014; Vandenbosch and Eggermont 2012). Additionally, others found no significant contributions of magazine exposure (Aubrey 2006a; Tiggemann and Slater 2015) or total media exposure (Zurbriggen et al. 2011). Indeed, in several studies, the television findings were not significant but the magazine findings were significant (Fardouly et al. 2015; Slater and Tiggemann 2014; Vandenbosch and Eggermont 2012). These patterns suggest that media formats may vary in their contributions to sexualization and that it may be beneficial to attend to specific relevant genres.

To further investigate the media's role in sexualization, we sought to build on this research in three ways. First, we expanded assessments beyond self-objectification to include other components of self-sexualization. We see self-sexualization as a larger construct that includes self-objectification as well as other self-focused cognitions, such as women's valuing of themselves mainly for their sexual appeal. Existing analyses (Table 1; all cited studies are based on U.S. samples unless otherwise noted) have mainly tested media contributions to the SO component of self-sexualization; we wanted to expand this. Second, we expanded existing work by using structural equation modeling (SEM) to test the unique contributions of multiple media genres, including lifestyle reality TV and romantic-themed movies. These genres are consumed by many U.S. women (e.g., Ward and Carlson 2013), but remain understudied. Finally, although most analyses have focused on women, modern media also emphasize men's bodies and sexual appeal. It is therefore likely that men exposed to this content may grow to feel defined by their sexual appeal; we used SEM to test that notion, here. Overall, we expected that everyday media use would be associated with self-sexualization for women *and* men, and explored whether some media formats would be especially influential.

Expanding Assessments of Self-Sexualization beyond Self-Objectification

As outlined earlier, sexualization is believed to include any one of four beliefs (American Psychological Association 2007). These beliefs can be imposed on women, who are sexualized, or these beliefs can be imposed on the self, as self-sexualization. Currently, there is no uniform definition in the field of self-sexualization. Some researchers who address this construct have focused on *affect and beliefs*, such as feelings about being sexy (Liss et al. 2011), or preferences and cognitions reflecting an internalized sexualization (McKenney and Bigler 2014). Others have focused on *behaviors*, on the things that women do to look sexy (Allen and Gervais 2012; Smolak et al. 2014). The APA Task Force Report (2007) does not offer a clear definition, but refers to self-sexualization as an internalization of a belief system. Drawing on this Report, we have chosen to define self-sexualization as occurring when women apply the assumptions of sexualization to themselves. In other words, to self-sexualize means that women come to value themselves mainly for their sexual appeal or sexual appearance, to the exclusion of other characteristics; that they equate their own attractiveness with being sexy; or that they self-objectify. Although our working definition of self-sexualization focuses on beliefs, matching those outlined in the APA report, we acknowledge that these beliefs play out in a range of behaviors, which are not assessed here.

Although most analyses to date have focused on media contributions to the self-objectification dimension of self-sexualization, self-objectification is only one component of self-sexualization. There has been less attention to the other components, such as whether media exposure contributes to how much women value their sexual appeal or enjoy being seen as sexy. Might a richer understanding of media effects on self-sexualization be obtained if broader conceptualizations of self-sexualization are used? There is currently no one measure that captures all components of self-sexualization.

Table 1 Thirteen studies testing direct links between girls'/women's regular media use and self-objectification

Authors	*Sample*	*Media Variables*	*SO*	*Outcomes*
Aubrey (2006a)	226 UG (66 % F, 70 % White); results for F	26 TV programs & 26 magazines, all rated high in SexO content	SOQ Surv	***SexO TV → SOQ** - SexO TV → Surv - SexO Mags → SOQ - SexO Mags → Surv
Aubrey (2006b)	149 UG F (74.5 % White)	26 TV programs & 26 mags, all high in SexO	SOQ	***SexO Media → SOQ,** marginal; mainly if low in self esteem
Aubrey (2007)	384 UG (59 % F, 71 % White); F & M together	26 TV programs & 26 mags, all rated high in SexO content	SOQ Surv	***SexO TV→ Surv** - SexO TV→ SOQ ***SexO Mags→ Surv** - SexO Mags → SOQ
Fardouly et al. (2015)	150 UG F from UK; 76 % White	Time spent using TV, music videos, & fashion mags	SOQ	- TV → SOQ - music videos → SOQ ***Fashion Mags → SOQ**
Grabe and Hyde (2009)	195 teen girls; 89 % White	Music video exposure (3 items)	Surv	***Music videos →Surv**
Morry and Staska (2001)	150 UG M & F (results for F)	5 fitness mags 9 beauty mags	SOQ	***Beauty Mags→ SOQ** - Fitness Mags – SOQ
Nowatzki and Morry (2009)	207 UG F (86 % White)	8 mags, 14 TV shows, & 3 genres, all high SexO	SOQ SB	***SexO Media→ SOQ** ***SexO Media → SB**
Slater and Tiggemann (2014)	1,087 teen girls; Australia	10 TV programs, 11 mags, all rated high in app. focus	SOQ Surv	- App TV → SOQ - App TV → Surv ***App Mags → SOQ** ***App Mags → Surv**
Tiggemann and Slater (2015)	204 girls 10–14; Australia	6 TV genres, 15 mags (teen, women's)	Surv	- TV → Surv - Mags → Surv
Vandenbosch and Eggermont (2012)	558 teen girls; Belgium	5 SexO TV programs, 3 music video channels, fashion mags	SOQ	- SexO TV → SOQ - Music Videos → SOQ ***Mags → SOQ**
Vandenbosch and Eggermont (2015)	730 teens, 44 % F, Belgium, M & F together	3 genres of SexO magazines	SOQ-M,	***SexO Mags → SOQ-M**
Vandenbosch et al. (2015)	495 F 18–26; Belgium	3 reality programs high in SexO content	SOQ-M	***SexO TV → SOQ-M**
Zurbriggen et al. (2011)	159 UG (68 % White; 57 % F), M & F together	16 TV genres, 8 mag. genres, 10 film genres, all rated for SexO level	Surv	- SexO Media → Surv ***SexO Mags → Surv**

Note. Significant findings are bolded and asterisked

UG undergraduate, *SOQ* trait self-objectification questionnaire, *SOQ-M* modified version of SOQ, *Surv* surveillance subscale of the OBC, *SB* sexualizing behavior scale, *SexO* sexually objectifying, *App* appearance-focused

All cited studies are based on U.S. samples unless otherwise noted

However, it is possible that individual measures that address some of the components can be employed together to measure the multi-dimensional construct of self-sexualization. Accordingly, we sought to employ both traditional measures that assess SO (i.e., the Surveillance sub-scale), as well as newer measures that focus on women's valuing of their sexual appeal, together, to reflect a latent construct of self-sexualization as outlined by the APA report (2007).

Extending Analyses to Include Reality Television and Romantic-Themed Movies

A second goal of our study was to examine contributions of specific media genres to self-sexualization, focusing on screen media. There are several indications that medium and genre matter, with evidence that the nature of objectifying content (e.g., Vandenbosch et al. 2013 - Flemish media) and the impact of this content both differ across media. For example, in several studies reported in Table 1, exposure to television content produced no significant connections to SO, but exposure to women's magazines did (e.g., Fardouly et al. 2015; Slater and Tiggemann 2014). This pattern highlights the power of objectifying magazine images. It is perhaps not surprising that fashion magazines are a media genre that is associated with self-objectification, given that the titles themselves indicate their emphasis on women's physical appearance: *Allure, Glamour, In Style, Vogue*. However, we believe that screen media (e.g., television, movies), are also relevant and examine three formats here.

One medium known for its high level of objectifying content is the music video. In music videos, the sexual objectification of women is carried out in many ways, but mainly via a strong visual emphasis on a narrow beauty ideal and a strong visual focus on women's sexual body parts (e.g., Aubrey and Frisby 2011; Ward et al. 2012). For example, of the 41 music videos noted to contain objectification in one content analysis (Ward et al. 2012), 90 % featured a camera shot focused on a woman's buttocks, and 76 % featured a camera shot focused on a woman's breasts. Frisby and Aubrey (2012) analyzed four indicators of sexual objectification in a set of R & B, pop, and country music videos by female artists. Overall, 71.7 % of the videos contained at least one of the four indicators of sexual objectification.

A second screen medium that has been documented to feature sexually objectifying portrayals of women is television programs. In television programs, the sexual objectification of women is expressed in a narrative context, typically via dialogue, storylines, or behaviors that emphasize the supreme value of a woman's appearance and sexual appeal (Kim et al. 2007; Vandenbosch and Eggermont 2012; Ward 1995). Because TV content, like magazine content, is diverse, we have chosen to focus on one specific genre that features considerable attention to sexual appeal: lifestyle reality programming. Reality TV is popular with young people and often dominates TV ratings. Data indicate that 11 of the top 20 most watched cable TV programs in 2012 by U.S. viewers aged 18–49 were reality programs, with *Jersey Shore, Teen Mom*, and *Kourtney and Kim Take New York* leading the list (Rice 2015). Analyses indicate that these programs often contain highly sexualized portrayals. In their analysis of five popular reality programs, Flynn et al. (2015) found that female cast members exposed their bodies more than 50 % of the time and exhibited higher rates of body exposure than male cast members. Additionally, reality *dating* programs were shown to contain six references per hour to women as sexual objects (Ferris et al. 2007). Furthermore, because reality TV characters are "real" people and not necessarily actors, exposure to objectification in this genre may help to authenticate the objectification.

A third screen medium we explore is motion pictures. Although emerging adults provide the largest per capita motion picture attendance by age in the U.S. (Motion Picture Association of America [MPAA] 2014), we know little about the nature or impact of sexually objectifying content in this medium. It can be expected that like TV, sexually objectifying content in movies is likely to be presented as part of a narrative, via storylines or dialogue, or via objectifying camera angles that focus on women's sexual body parts. Analyses indicate that youth-oriented films frequently sexually objectify women and commonly feature men ogling women's bodies and losing their senses in the presence of a beautiful woman (Martin and Kazyak 2009; Towbin et al. 2003). Analyzing the sexual content in 90 teen-oriented films, Callister et al. (2011) found that *the* most prevalent type of sexual dialogue emerging, comprising 28 % of the 435 incidents coded, were sexual body comments, defined as "any comment that sexualizes a person physically" (p. 463). Of the many movie genres available, we chose to study movies that focus on romantic relationships, such as romantic comedies (e.g., *Friends with Benefits*) or dramas with romantic themes or sub-themes, such as *Twilight*. Because these genres center on courtship and romance, we anticipate that the thematic content and dialogue will include a heavy emphasis on the importance of women's physical appearance and sexual appeal.

Drawing on the findings presented here, we expect that attention to women's sexual appeal and physical appearance will be high in the three selected media formats, and that heavy exposure to these formats will encourage women to value themselves in the same way. We anticipate that some media formats might be more influential than others, but make no format-specific hypotheses because supporting evidence is minimal. Instead, we offer the following general expectation:

> H1: Heavier exposure to music videos, romantic-themed movies, and lifestyle reality programming will each contribute to greater self-sexualization for women (Fig. 1).

Applying Concerns of Media Sexualization to Young Men

Whereas initial analyses of media sexualization have focused on women, as is consistent with arguments of objectification theory, current evidence suggests that this issue also extends to men. From shirtless Jacob (Taylor Lautner) in the *Twilight* movies, to Mike "The Situation" Sorrentino on *Jersey Shore* known

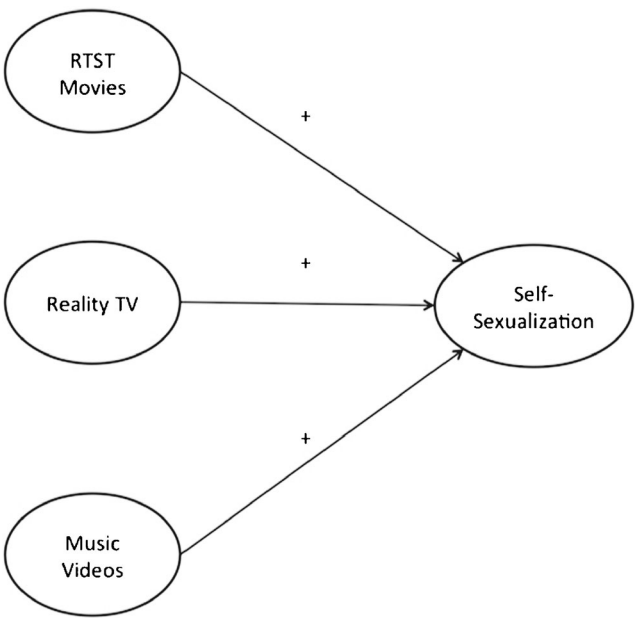

Fig. 1 Proposed structural model

mainly for his "six-pack," to magazine covers featuring "The Sexiest Man Alive," sexually objectifying portrayals of men have increased in past decades, such that men are now commonly featured for their aesthetic or sexual appeal (Pope et al. 2001; Rohlinger 2002). For example, in their analysis of the sexualization of models on *Rolling Stone* covers, Hatton and Trautner (2011) found that sexualized representations of men increased 55 % from the 1960s to the 2000s. Similarly, Pope et al. (2001) found that the proportion of undressed men (e.g., without a shirt) pictured in men's and women's magazines increased from 3 % in the 1950s to a peak of 35 % in the 1990s.

Analyses of screen media paint a similar picture. Although music videos are documented to sexualize women to a greater extent than they sexualize men, portrayals of male sexualization are also present, and frequently feature muscular men who are shirtless and engaging in sexually suggestive dance (Aubrey and Frisby 2011; Vandenbosch et al. 2013 - Flemish media). Similar characterizations extend to reality TV, whose male cast members have been shown to be more muscular and have lower levels of body fat than average U.S. men (Dallesasse and Kluck 2013). Morrison and Halton (2009) analyzed 159 male characters in several top-grossing action movies from 1980 to 2006. They found that body fat levels had decreased over time, and that muscularity and objectification had increased. Together, these findings suggest that for screen media, the sexual appeal of the male body has become a more central feature.

Studies indicate that exposure to this content affects men's self-objectification in much the same way that it affects women's. In some studies presented in Table 1, men and women were tested together, and no significant gender differences were reported (Aubrey 2007; Vandenbosch and Eggermont 2015; Zurbriggen et al. 2011). Others have focused solely on men or tested men separately. Aubrey (2006a) reported that men's exposure to sexually objectifying TV at time 1 predicted an increase in trait SO 1 year later, and that exposure to sexually objectifying magazines and TV programs each predicted an increase in men's body surveillance. Aubrey and Taylor (2009) reported that men's magazine exposure at time 1 predicted greater body surveillance at time 2. In a path analysis, sexually objectifying media consumption (exposure to 16 sexually objectifying TV programs and 16 magazines) predicted greater body surveillance for heterosexual and gay adult men in Italy (Dakanalis et al. 2012). However, null results are also reported, with young men's regular exposure to fitness magazines (Morry and Staska 2001), and adolescent boys' regular exposure to music video channels, lad magazines, or objectifying TV programs (Vandenbosch and Eggermont 2013 - Flemish media) each failing to predict their self-objectification. We therefore test these connections here, investigating if young men's exposure to specific media formats that frequently emphasize men's physical appearance and sexual appeal will encourage men to value themselves in this way. We hypothesize that:

> H2: Heavier exposure to music videos, romantic-themed movies, and lifestyle reality programs will each contribute to greater self-sexualization for men (Fig. 1).

Our goal, then, is to expand current tests of media contributions to self-sexualization by including understudied media genres and by including men, and by doing so using several individual measures of self-sexualization, viewed together as one latent construct.

Method

Participants

Surveys were completed by 1,191 undergraduates (59 % women; n=702) attending a large Mid-western university. Most participants (93 %; n=1,107) indicated that they had spent their formative years (ages 5–15) in the United States. Because gender beliefs, including beliefs about female objectification, are affected by underlying cultural norms, we chose to exclude from our final sample those who had been raised outside the U.S. (mostly in South Asian and East Asian countries). Our final sample consisted of 1,107 undergraduates (59.5 % women; n=658) raised in the U.S. Demographic characteristics are presented by gender in Table 2. Compared to women, men were slightly older, had more educated parents, were less likely to identify as Black/African American, and were more likely to identify as Asian American.

Measures

Media Exposure

To assess exposure to reality TV, participants were given a list of 34 popular lifestyle reality programs (e.g., *Jersey Shore,*

Table 2 Demographic characteristics of the sample

Variable	Women	Men	$t(df)$ / $X^2(df)$
Age	19.02 years	19.43 years	7.43 (1,103)***
White/Caucasian	73.4 %	72.1 %	.23 (1)
Asian American	11.2 %	16.3 %	5.89 (1)*
Black/African American	7.3 %	3.1 %	8.76 (1)**
Latino/Hispanic	3.2 %	3.1 %	.00 (1)
Middle Eastern	3.5 %	4.0 %	.20 (1)
Mother's Education	16.26 years	16.70 years	3.03 (1,102)**
Father's Education	16.93 years	17.56 years	3.69 (1,098)***

Note. *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Real Housewives) currently airing on network TV or basic cable networks (MTV, VH1, Bravo, TLC, and E!). Programs were chosen based on website rankings of popular reality programs (e.g., tv.com) and on data published about reality programs and college students (e.g., Egbert and Belcher 2012). Participants were asked to indicate how frequently they had ever viewed the 34 programs using the following response options scored 0–3: *never, sometimes (1–4 episodes*), *often (6–10 episodes),* and *all of the time (most or all episodes).* A sum across all 34 programs was calculated. We chose to use these response options instead of assessing weekly viewing amounts to better capture viewing that occurs via DVDs, Netflix, or full-day marathons.

To assess exposure to romantic-themed or sub-themed (RTST) movies, participants were given a list of 93 box-office films released in 2009, 2010, and 2011 and were asked to indicate (yes/no) whether they had seen each film. A total score was calculated by summing the "yes" responses. The movies provided were selected via a three-step process. We first obtained a list of the 90 top-grossing movies of each of the 3 years from the Box Office Mojo website. We then excluded movies from the list that were fully animated because we wanted the focus to be on the modeling of human relationships and human bodies. Finally, we worked with a team of five graduate students and seven undergraduates to select any movies that had courtship, a romantic relationship, or a sexual relationship as a dominant plot (e.g., *500 Days of Summer, Crazy Stupid Love*) or sub-plot (e.g., *In Time*). Resulting was the list of 93 films included here.

To assess music video exposure, participants were asked to indicate how many hours they spent on a typical weekday, Saturday, and Sunday consuming music videos, with response options ranging from 0 to 10+ hours. A weekly total was computed by multiplying the weekday amount by 5 and adding this product to the Saturday and Sunday amounts.

Self-Sexualization Measures

Three measures were included to assess multiple dimensions of self-sexualization. The first measure examined the extent to which individuals objectify their own bodies, as assessed via the Surveillance sub-scale of the Objectified Body Consciousness Scales–Youth (Lindberg et al. 2006). We chose the youth version of the scale because 86 % of our sample was aged 16–19. Respondents indicated their level of agreement with each of four items (α=.90; 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.

A second measure was the Enjoyment of Sexualization Scale (Liss et al. 2011), designed to capture the extent to which individuals seek to and enjoy emphasizing their sexiness. The measure was initially designed for women, but was later shown to be valid for men (Visser et al. 2014). Participants noted their level of agreement with each of eight items using a 6-point scale anchored by *strongly disagree* at 1 and *strongly agree* at 6. Sample items included "I love to feel sexy" and "I like showing off my body." Mean scores were computed across the eight items such that higher scores indicated a greater enjoyment of sexualization (EOS). Internal reliabilities reported by the authors (alphas of .85 and .86 for women and .88 for men) were comparable to the internal reliabilities obtained among our sample (α=.89 for women; α=.90 for men).

A third measure assessed the degree to which participants base their self-worth on their sexual appeal via the Sexual Appeal subscale of the Gordon and Ward (2000) Self-Worth Measure. We chose to use this measure because it assesses self-evaluations within a real-world context that fits students' lives. For this scale, participants are given the following prompt: "How would you feel about yourself if . . ." and are asked to indicate the extent to which they would feel better or worse about themselves in each of 23 incidents, 13 of which reflect their sexual attractiveness and appeal. Sample items include, "you were asked to be a model for a calendar featuring college students" and "you had to go out in public with a large pimple on your face." Responses are indicated using a 7-point scale anchored by "Ugh, I would feel worthless" at −3, and "Wow! I would feel really great about myself" at +3. Higher scores, based on mean absolute values across the items (α=.79), reflect the extent to which self-worth is affected by sex appeal.

Procedure

Participants were recruited from the psychology subject pool. All students enrolled in introductory psychology classes could sign up for this study, which was identified by a number only. Participants completed paper-and-pencil surveys during small-group administrations in a research lab. Participants were told that it was a study of media use and social relationships. The survey packet included several instruments that were not analyzed here, such as measures assessing students' gender ideologies, sexual attitudes, and socialization experiences. The order of measures was randomized in the survey packets. Administration of the full survey took approximately 45 min, including consent and debriefing procedures, and was completed across two academic terms from January to December of 2012.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Descriptive statistics by gender for the central variables are provided in Table 3. As the first preliminary analysis, we conducted

Table 3 Descriptive statistics and gender differences in media use and self-sexualization variables

	Range	Female Mean	Male Mean	Gender Diff (*F*)
Media use variables				
Wilks' Lamba				130.88 (3,1093)***
Weekly Music Video Hours	0–70.00	3.01	3.54	1.58 (1,1095)
RTST Movies	0–85.00	35.34	26.67	125.78 (1,1095)***
34 Reality TV Programs	0–69.00	16.78	5.69	327.00 (1,1095)***
Self-sexualization variables				
Wilks' Lamba				57.82 (3,1071)***
Enjoyment of Sexualization	1.38–6.00	4.22	4.33	5.61 (1,1073)*
SelfObj - Surveillance	1.00–6.00	4.50	3.86	99.70 (1,1073)***
Sexual Appeal Self Worth	.08–2.92	1.74	1.54	48.58 (1,1073)***

Note. *$p<.05$; **$p<.01$; ***$p<.001$

two one-way MANOVAS to test for gender differences in the media measures and sexualization measures. Results are provided in the final column of Table 3. Significant gender differences emerged for both sets of variables. Findings indicate that women viewed more RTST movies and reality programs than men, and that there was no significant difference between women's and men's reports of music video exposure. Additionally, women reported higher levels than men of body surveillance and sexual appeal self-worth; men reported greater enjoyment of sexualization than women.

As the second set of preliminary analyses, we conducted zero-order correlations to examine the extent to which media variables and self-sexualization variables correlate. We ran correlations separately for women and men (see Table 4). For both women and men, the three sexualization measures were moderately correlated with each other. The sexualization variables were also correlated with most of the media use variables for both women and men, except for music video consumption.

Missing Data

We used listwise deletion to eliminate missing data (43 cases with missing data; 3.88 %). There were no significant differences on age, ethnicity, and parents' educational status between participants with and without missing data.

Table 4 Zero-order correlations between media and self-sexualization variables for women and men

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1. EOS	–	.36***	.44***	.20***	.19***	−.03
2. Surveillance	.48***	–	.46***	.11**	.16***	.02
3. Sexual Appeal	.45***	.52***	–	.11**	.14***	.05
4. RTST Movies	.11*	.11*	.08	–	.16***	.03
5. Reality TV	.19***	.15**	.16**	.28***	–	.01
6. Music Videos	.07	.11*	.07	−.10*	−.02	–

Note. *$p<.05$; **$p<.01$; ***$p<.001$

Correlations for women are above the diagonal and correlations for men are below the diagonal

Testing the Main Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

Our first hypothesis was that diverse media formats (reality television, RTST movies, and music videos) would contribute to self-sexualization among women. In order to test this hypothesis, we used LISREL maximum likelihood estimation to test our proposed structural model (see Fig. 1). Indicators for Reality TV were assigned to parcels using the "item-to-construct balance" technique recommended by Little et al. (2002). Factor loadings are computed for a one-factor model and items are distributed across three "parcels" according to their factor loadings, such that the three highest-loading items are distributed across the three parcels, followed by the next three highest loadings, until all items are distributed across the three parcels.

We first tested a measurement model to examine the relations between measured variables and latent constructs. The first pathway between each indicator and its latent construct was set to 1 (Kline 2011). The measurement model for women demonstrated good fit, χ^2 (16, N=636)=34.75, p=.004, NNFI=.98, CFI=.99, RMSEA=.043 with 90 % CI [.023, .062], SRMR=.026. Standardized factor loadings ranged from .60 to .91 and were significant at α=.001, indicating that our latent constructs were adequately operationalized.

Next, we tested the proposed structural model. Again, the first pathway between each indicator and its latent construct was set to 1 (Kline 2011). The proposed model demonstrated acceptable fit, χ^2 (19, N=636)=53.27, $p<.01$, NNFI=.97, CFI=.98, RMSEA=.053 with 90 % CI [.037, .070], SRMR=.050. Both reality television and RTST movies significantly and positively contributed to self-sexualization; music videos did not significantly contribute to self-sexualization (see Fig. 2).

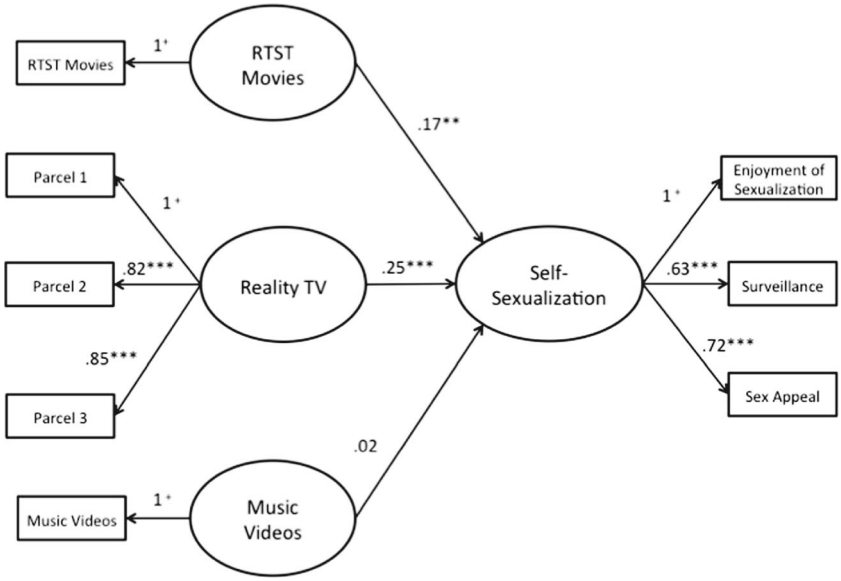

Fig. 2 Structural Model for Women[+]Path set to 1; * $p<.05$; ** $p<.01$; *** $p<.001$

Hypothesis 2

Our second hypothesis was that heavier exposure to diverse media formats would predict greater self-sexualization for men, just as it did for women. In order to test this hypothesis, we used LISREL maximum likelihood estimation to test our proposed structural model (see Fig. 1). Similar to the analysis for women, we used the "item-to-construct balance" technique (Little et al. 2002) to assign the Reality TV programs to parcels. The first pathway between each indicator and its latent construct was set to 1 (Kline 2011). We first tested the measurement model for men. The measurement model for men demonstrated excellent fit, χ^2 (16, N=429)=10.36, p=.85, NNFI=1.01, CFI=1.00, RMSEA=.00 with 90 % CI [.000, .026], SRMR=.016. Standardized factor loadings ranged from .66 to .82 and were significant at α=.001, indicating that our latent constructs were adequately operationalized.

Next, we tested the proposed structural model for men. The model fit the data well, χ^2 (19, N=429)=49.23, $p<.01$, NNFI=.96, CFI=.97, RMSEA=.059 with 90 % CI [.038, .080], SRMR=.076. For men, both reality television and music videos significantly and positively contributed to self-sexualization; however, RTST movies did not significantly contribute to self-sexualization (see Fig. 3).

Discussion

The frequent occurrence of sexually objectifying portrayals of women in mainstream media has raised concern for its impact both on others' impressions of women and for women's views of themselves. There has been substantial literature over the past decade documenting that experimental exposure to this content leads women and men to have a diminished view of women's competence, morality, and humanity (e.g., Gervais et al. 2012; Johnson and Gurung 2011; Vaes et al. 2011- Italy). What is less clear, however, is whether *everyday* exposure to this content leads women to sexualize themselves in ways argued by objectification theory (Fredrickson and Roberts 1997) and by the American Psychological Association (2007). We investigated that notion, here, building on existing cross-sectional (e.g., Aubrey 2007; Slater and Tiggemann 2014) and longitudinal (e.g., Aubrey 2006a; 2006b) survey studies, which have yielded mixed results. Our findings support expectations of objectification theory and extend these connections to men, to seldom-studied media genres such as romantic-themed movies, and to broader assessments of self-sexualization. We summarize below three take-home messages.

First, our findings support expectations that women's everyday media use predicts their self-sexualization, and extend this evidence to include their consumption of lifestyle reality programs and romantic-themed and sub-themed (RTST) movies. Among the women tested here, more frequent exposure to RTST movies and to lifestyle reality programs correlated with each of the individual measures of self-sexualization. Moreover, in our SEM model, both RTST movies and reality programs significantly predicted our latent construct of self-sexualization. By including genres that have not been heavily studied, such as RTST movies and reality programs, we show some unique and significant contributions of specific popular media genres to women's self-sexualization. This study is one of the first to focus directly on the contributions of RTST movies to self-sexualization. We see our findings as a first step, and acknowledge that further study is needed of the content and power of these genres.

Second, our findings extend these patterns to men and indicate that specific components of men's media use may contribute

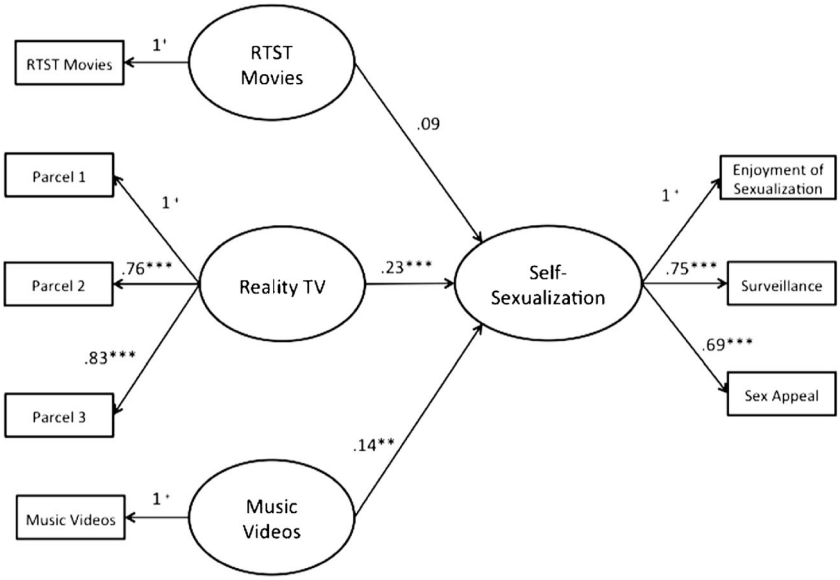

Fig. 3 Structural Model for Men[+]Path set to 1; * $p<.05$; ** $p<.01$; *** $p<.001$

to their self-sexualization. Many analyses of SO and sexualization have focused on women (e.g., Grabe and Hyde 2009; Nowatzki and Morry 2009), under the assumption that societal constructions of femininity, but not masculinity, include notions of objectification. Traditional U.S. cultural scripts dictate that men are sexual agents, not sexual objects, agents who are valued for their accomplishments, intellect, and instrumentality (Mahalik et al. 2003). However, it appears that this pattern may be shifting to now include concerns about sexual appearance for men. Indeed, men's scores reflecting their enjoyment of sexualization were higher than women's scores. It may be the case that an enjoyment of sexualization means something different to men than to women. It is possible that men seek to look "hot" or sexy not because it validates part of their self-worth, but because they feel that doing so will gain women's attention. It may also be the case that this enjoyment of sexualization is age-specific, perhaps as a salient feature of emerging adulthood. Future work will want to test this premise and investigate if this enjoyment of sexualization persists as men age.

In terms of specific media formats the more consistent correlates for men were music videos and lifestyle reality programs. Although women and men consumed music videos at equal rates, this exposure seemed to matter more for men than for women. This outcome is surprising because there is abundant literature documenting high levels of objectifying content in music videos (e.g., Frisby and Aubrey 2012). Our null results for women may be a consequence of the recent shift in the consumption of music videos from TV channels (e.g., MTV), where television executives control the options, to online channels such as You-Tube, where users select the videos to view. Perhaps with this new user format, women are less likely to select and view the more sexually objectifying videos. More nuanced measures of music video exposure are needed to better determine how and why associations emerged for men and not women. We also noted that RTST movies were significant predictors for women but not men. This is not surprising given that men consumed this movie genre less often than women; perhaps more contributions of movie exposure for men might be observed with other types of movies, such as action movies.

A third message is that future research should consider expanding assessments of self-sexualization beyond measures of SO, as it is often currently measured. This is one of the first studies to test media contributions to the perceived importance of sexual appeal in women's and men's self-evaluations as assessed via the Enjoyment of Sexualization Scale and the Sexual Appeal Self-Worth measure. Our measurement models confirmed that these two scales fit well with the Surveillance subscale for women and men, and together the three scales can be perceived to reflect the multi-dimensional construct of self-sexualization. We acknowledge that the three measures we selected are not the only way to measure self-sexualization, and that these measures do not correspond perfectly to the three dimensions of self-sexualization outlined earlier. We therefore encourage the field to continue to measure self-sexualization in ways that focus on aspects other than body surveillance. It would also be useful to include measures that address the sexualizing behavior aspect of self-sexualization (Allen and Gervais 2012; Smolak et al. 2014).

The implications for adopting this perspective toward the self are varied and significant. Objectification theory argues that self-objectification, which is one form of self-sexualization, should lead to diminished body esteem, self-esteem, mental health, and sexual functioning (Fredrickson and Roberts 1997). Sixteen years of research have validated

these expectations, with dozens of studies linking self-objectification to body dissatisfaction, depressive affect, and eating disorders (for a review, see Moradi and Huang 2008). More recently, these consequences have extended to other domains. For example, Calogero (2013) demonstrated that greater trait SO predicted more gender-specific system justification (i.e., greater acceptance of the gender status quo) and less engagement in gender-based social activism. Additionally, Fox et al. (2014) found that controlling a sexualized avatar in a virtual world lead to greater SO, which in turn predicted greater acceptance of rape myths. Together this body of research signifies that the consequences of SO for women extend into multiple areas of functioning. Additional work is needed testing the consequences of other components of self-sexualization, such as valuing oneself mainly for one's sexual appeal, to the exclusion of other characteristics.

Limitations and Future Directions

Although the findings presented here offer exciting extensions of current work, we acknowledge several limitations that contextualize our results. First, our sampling of individual media formats was limited. We did not sample all reality programs or romantic movies, and acknowledge that inclusion of other examples may yield different results. Also, lifestyle reality programs and RTST movies are only two of many TV and movie genres, and we expect other genres not sampled here may also play a role. For example, TV situation comedies (sitcoms), like RTST movies, often focus on courtship and sexual relationships (e.g., *Friends*). Although the imagery on sitcoms may not be sexually explicit, verbal comments about women's bodies and sexual appeal are frequent occurrences (e.g., Kim et al. 2007). Future research may want to include other TV genres such as sitcoms, and also include other media that young men consume at higher levels than young women, such as video games (e.g., Lucas and Sherry 2004).

Second, these findings are based on relatively homogeneous samples of upper middle-class college students, and therefore cannot be extrapolated to all emerging adults. Third, the overall survey was somewhat long, and even though measure order was randomized, participant fatigue may have played a role. Finally, because the data are cross-sectional, we acknowledge that the direction of causality remains in question. We worked within objectification theory (Fredrickson and Roberts 1997), arguing and testing whether accumulated media exposure, sampled at this one point in time, may be linked to self-sexualization. We cannot rule out that relations may work in the other direction, such that women and men who self-sexualize are drawn to media content that confirms their world- and self-views. Additional longitudinal analyses are needed (e.g., Aubrey 2006a) to help clarify the direction of causality. Although these viewer selectivity explanations are always a possibility, we argue that they may carry less weight here because we selected media content that is highly consumed and that almost *all* emerging adults are exposed to. Indeed, within our sample, 97.7 % of women and 79.9 % of men viewed at least one of the 34 reality TV programs, and 99.8 % saw at least one of the 93 RTST movies. Therefore, nearly all participants were exposed to the media content under investigation.

Conclusions

Overall, these findings indicate several pathways through which media use may contribute to college students' self-sexualization. Consuming popular lifestyle reality programs, romantic-themed movies (women only), and music videos (men only) was each linked to greater self-sexualization, as measured by three individual scales. With these findings, we demonstrate that diverse media, especially popular and relationship-oriented media, are indeed associated with how women and men view their bodies and value themselves. Yet holding the narrow self-view that is self-sexualization is not without consequence, and has been linked to higher rates of depressive affect, disordered eating, and lower self-esteem (Moradi and Huang 2008). Although individual women and men may choose not to expose themselves to high levels of sexually objectifying media content, the reality is that this content is virtually unavoidable in light of the media saturated environment in which we live.

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