Adolescents’ Objectification of Their Same-Sex Friends: Indirect Relationships With Media Use Through SelfObjectification, Rewarded Appearance Ideals, and Online Appearance Conversations

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## Sample

640 participants aged 12 to 18 years from 19 participating Flemish schools

# Abstract

The current cross-sectional study among adolescent boys and girls (N = 640, Mage
= 15.47, SD = 1.63) examined whether exposure to popular television programs
and Facebook predicts the extent to which adolescents objectify their same-sex
friends. Two pathways were tested to explain these relationships. The first included
internalization of rewarded appearance ideals and self-objectification. The second
included appearance conversations with friends on Facebook. Results revealed that
adolescents’ television exposure and Facebook use only indirectly predicted friend\_x0002\_objectification through their engagement in appearance conversations on Facebook.
The relationship between television exposure and friend-objectification was also fully
mediated by internalization and self-objectification

# Outcome

"Although sexualizing photographs are prevalent on SNSs, Facebook use was not associated with the internalization of rewarded appearance ideals. As Facebook mostly relies on contact with friends and acquaintances, future research may benefit from measuring SNS use to monitor celebrities or models or addressing internalization with a measure that exclusively focuses on standards of appearance promoted on SNSs. Higher levels of self-objectification related to more objectification of others. A media-induced objectifying view might have negative consequences on adolescent friendships through internalization of appearance ideals and an objectifying self-view. However, the mixed results with regard to Facebook use indicate that the relation between media use and friend-objectification may not exclusively be explained by the mechanisms inspired by objectification theory. Popular TV programs and Facebook were predictive of more frequent online appearance conversations with friends. A possible explanation may be the presence of an appearance culture among friends by which adolescents learn the value of an attractive physical appearance. This culture also plays a role in the way adolescents view and evaluate their friends. Although no significant differences were found between gender, girls had higher mean values than boys on the measures in the model, except friend-objectification and rating their appearance-related body attributes as almost as important as their competence-related attributes, whereas boys generally rated their competence-related
attributes more clearly as more important. These results reflect the traditional expectations that men are the ones who objectify, whereas women are more likely to be the ones who are objectified." (Rousseau et al., 2017, pp. 16-18)