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Picture This! Objectification Versus Empowerment in Women's Photos on Social Media

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to examine women's motivations for posting sexualized photos of themselves on social media sites. In Western society, women are objectified through many forms of media, such as magazines and television. As a result, women have learned to view themselves as objects, through a process known as self-objectification (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

Women experience a number of negative consequences from self-objectification, such as depression, anxiety, and eating disorders (Moradi & Huang, 2008). Despite all of the research indicating the negative effects of the objectification of women, other research has shown that some women enjoy feeling sexualized (Liss, Erchull, & Ramsey, 2011) because it gives them a sense of empowerment and self-worth, although some researchers believe this may simply represent another form of social control over women and their sexuality (Gill, 2008). The overarching hypothesis is that women who post self-sexualizing photos (especially if they receive many "likes" on those photos) will have a greater sense of sexual empowerment rather than self-objectification. Undergraduate women ( $N=45$ ) completed a number of surveys that related to objectification and empowerment and downloaded 10 photos of themselves from their social media sites. After coding the photographs, our results showed that none of the empowerment or objectification measures correlated with the degree of sexualization in the photos. The sexualized photos did correlate with the motivation statements of obtaining attention and more friends/followers.

**Picture This! Objectification Versus Empowerment in Women's Photos on Social Media**

In Western society, women are frequently portrayed as objects and their self-worth is depicted through their appearance (Moradi & Huang, 2008). Objectification theory states that girls even see themselves as objects to be viewed and used as opposed to seeing themselves as a full person (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). As a result of this objectification, women also believe their self-worth is based on their appearance and not internal characteristics such as their personalities. As objects, women are then expected to be submissive and obedient (Nussbaum, 1999). This trend is a growing problem for women due to these sexualized depictions seen in many forms of media, such as magazines and television showing women as submissive, less superior to men, and just a pretty face (e.g., Conley & Ramsey, 2011).

Objectification theory argues that the bombardment of sexual images of women's bodies can lead to internalization, known as self-objectification, where women internally view themselves as objects that men use for sex/sexual behaviors (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Moradi & Huang, 2008). Self-objectification has led to many negative consequences for women and their bodies such as shame, depression, anxiety, eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia, and self-harm (Moradi & Huang, 2008). Not only does it have consequences for women internally, the objectification of women in many forms of media has impacted women in their daily lives with increases in victim sexualization such as rape and sexual harassment (Szymanski, Moffitt, & Carr, 2011).

While much of the research on self-objectification has pointed to its negative consequences, some women seem to enjoy self-sexualization, which refers to intentionally engaging in activities to appear more sexually appealing (Smolak, Murnen, & Myers, 2014) because it gives them a sense of empowerment (Erchull & Liss, 2013; Liss, Erchull, & Ramsey,

2011). Being sexualized by men empowers some women to be and feel more confident. A study conducted by Moor (2010) found that women's perceptions of their motivations for wearing revealing clothing was for their own desire to feel attractive and desired, not to signal interest in sex. This sense of empowerment, being wanted by men but not being sexually submissive to them, is seen as an indication that women are taking control of their sexuality (e.g., Baumgardner & Richards, 2004). A study done by Levy (2005) found that women who enjoy displaying their bodies and wearing tight clothing gain a high self-esteem and a sense of empowerment from the attention they receive. Although images of women actively encouraging sexualized attention may seem empowering, some researchers believe they may simply represent another form of social control over women and their sexuality (Gill, 2008), and therefore self-sexualization is another form of self-objectification. Even with the rise of feminism, which works toward gender equality and female empowerment, research still finds that men automatically objectify women by implicitly associating them with objects and tools (Rudman & Mescher, 2012). The present research will investigate the degree to which objectification versus feelings of sexual empowerment predict self-sexualizing behavior. Given that this is one of the first studies of self-sexualization via social media, this study will also explore other motivations women may have for posting self-sexualized photos on social media sites.

The self-sexualization of women slowly emerged onto the World Wide Web in the last decade and seems to have spread with the rise of social media sites such as Facebook and Instagram. These social media sites allow people to share and comment on photos within a network of friends, family, acquaintances, and even strangers. This female sexualization has been presented in women's social media photos according to Bartky's (1990) definition of sexualization, which has been conceptualized as the separating of a female's body into parts,

having women regard those parts as fully representing themselves to those who view them. One study in particular looked at sexualization in Myspace profile pictures and found the degree of sexualization to be low compared to sexualized displays coded in advertising (Hall, West, & McIntyre, 2012). However, newer social media sites such as Instagram have emerged since this research was conducted; for example Instagram has a singular emphasis on photo sharing and therefore the site may promote self-sexualization. Regardless of the degree of sexualization on social media sites, it is important to understand women's motivations behind posting self-sexualized photos.

Only a few studies have examined the motivations behind why women post sexualized photos of themselves on social media sites. One study looked at Facebook profile photographs and the appearance-contingency self-worth scale, which measures the extent to which appearance plays a central role in influencing one's self-esteem (Ruckel, 2013). The study revealed that women who reported higher levels of self-objectification and who identified more strongly with the appearance-contingency of self-worth scale were more likely to post sexualized Facebook profile photographs. This research suggests that when women believe they are constantly being monitored and evaluated on their own appearance, their self-esteem can be seriously altered depending on whether they were complimented on their looks or not. Another study conducted by de Vries & Peter (2013) had participants make new profiles on a media account. They found that when participants believed they were being watched by an online audience, they were more likely to self-objectify themselves compared to participants who had no audience. None of the previous research has investigated the role of sexual empowerment in women posting photos of themselves on social media; therefore much is still unknown about this

phenomenon. Media researchers have called for more empirical understanding of the relationship between social media use and self-objectification (de Vries & Peter, 2013).

One of the primary goals of this study is to examine the sexualized photos women have posted to their social media accounts and examine whether they correlate with the objectification or empowerment measures. These measures will examine whether women experience self-objectification and body shame, or whether they enjoy sexualization, view sex as a form of power, and have a sense of sexual agency. The hypothesis is that sexualized photos will correlate more with the empowerment measures, indicating that women post self-sexualizing photos because they enjoy feeling sexualized.

This study will also explore specific motivations behind why women post certain photos on social media sites. To assess the motivations for posting photos on social media sites, participants specifically indicated how they choose which photos to post on their social media by ranking factors such as how attractive they look, where they are, and what they are doing. The hypothesis is that women who rank "how attractive I look" as a primary motivation for posting photos on social media are more likely to post self-sexualized photos. Additionally, we explored whether photos are posted to gain attention, such as through wanting more "likes" on the photo and more "friends" or "followers" on the social media site. We anticipate that women who are more likely to want attention on social media are more likely to post sexualized photos.

Finally, this study also included measures of self-esteem and staking one's self-worth in attention from social media (for example, feeling better about oneself when one receives "likes" and comments). Additionally, we tracked the number of actual "likes" on each photo in order to test the hypothesis that women who receive more "likes" on their photos will be more likely to post sexualized photos of themselves on social media sites. By finding the motivations of why

some women post self-sexualized photos, we can better understand this phenomenon of sexual empowerment and how it may or may not influence women's sense of self-worth.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Participants ( $N=45$ ;  $M_{\text{age}}=19.02$ ,  $SD=1.08$ ) were recruited through the Bridgewater State University Psychology Department participant pool. The criteria for participants to enroll in this study were that they must be female, over the age of 18 years old, enrolled in psychology courses at BSU, and must have a social media account on Facebook and/or Instagram. Of those 45 participants, 80% identified as White/Caucasian, and 75.5% considered their socio-economic status as Middle or Upper class.

### **Procedure**

Participants entered the lab and were given an informed consent form to read over and sign to indicate they were female, over the age of 18, and agreed to participate in the study. Participants were also verbally provided information about the study, what would be obtained from their social media account, how the photos would be stored, and who would see them. After signing the consent form, participants were asked to log into their social media account (Instagram and/or Facebook). Once logged in, the participant informed the researcher how many friends/followers they had on each site and was given an instruction sheet on how to take screenshots of the ten most recent photos that contain themselves in the photo. To be selected, the photo had to (1) include the participant and (2) be the participants' own photo on their social media account.

Once the participants had taken screenshots of their own photos and saved them to the computer, they were moved to another computer where they completed the survey measures via Qualtrics. While the participant filled out the measures on one computer, the researcher went

through the ten photos the participant saved from Facebook and/or Instagram and edited the photos by opening Paint to de-identify any possible information that can be linked back to the participant, such as their name, as well as erasing any other person in the photo besides the participant. The researcher also recorded how many “likes” each photo had. Last, participants were given a debriefing form about the study, and they were assured that their photos and data would be kept confidential and safe on a password protected external hard-drive.

### **Measures of Empowerment**

*Enjoyment of Sexualization Scale.* To assess the extent to which women enjoy being sexualized by men, participants completed the Enjoyment of Sexualization Scale (Liss et al., 2011). This was an 8-item scale with statements such as “I want men to look at me” ( $\alpha = .84$ ). Responses ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree).

*Sex is Power scale.* To assess the empowerment that women feel via their sexuality, participants completed the Sex is Power scale. This was a 13-item scale that assessed the extent to which women believe that they personally gain power over men through their sexuality. Statements included “If a man is attracted to me, I can usually get him to do what I want him to do” ( $\alpha = .89$ ; Erchull & Liss, 2013). Responses ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree).

*Sexual Self-Efficacy Scale for Women.* To assess the perceived confidence of females and whether or not they engage in different sexual activities, participants completed the Sexual Self-Efficacy Scale for Women (Fichten, Amsel, & Robillard, 1988). Also known as sexual agency, this scale consisted of 18 items that assess how capable the participant feels in four aspects of sexual responses, including desire (e.g., “Feel sexual desire for the partner;”  $\alpha = .96$ ), affection (e.g., “Be interested in sex,”  $\alpha = .869$ ), communication, (e.g., “Ask the partner to

provide the type and amount of sexual stimulation requested,"  $\alpha = .85$ ), body acceptance, (e.g., "Feel comfortable being nude with the partner,"  $\alpha = .893$ ), and refusal, (e.g., "Refuse a sexual advance by the partner,"  $\alpha = .80$ ). The measure asked participants to rank their confidence with which they can do the activities listed, where responses ranged from 1, "quite uncertain" to 10, "quite certain". If they thought they were unable to do the activity then they chose 0.

### **Measures of Objectification**

***Objectified Body Consciousness Scale.*** To assess self-objectification and body shame, participants completed two subscales of the Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (McKinley & Hyde, 1996). These combined subscales contained 16 items. For the surveillance subscale, participants responded to items such as "during the day, I think about how I look many times" ( $\alpha = .82$ ). For the body shame subscale, participants responded to items such as "when I can't control my weight, I feel like something must be wrong with me" ( $\alpha = .76$ ). Responses ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree).

***Self-Objectification Questionnaire.*** To assess self-objectification, participants completed the Self-Objectification Questionnaire (Noll & Frederickson, 1998). Participants ranked 10 attributes according to their impact on their personal self-concept. This measure compared how they rank attributes pertaining to how their bodies look (e.g., "weight") vs. how their bodies function (e.g., "health"). Responses ranged from 1 (being most important) to 10 (being least important).

***Objectification of Women Questionnaire.*** To assess the objectification of women, participants used the modified Self-Objectification Questionnaire (Strelan & Hargreaves, 2005). This measure is a 10-item questionnaire, where participants ranked the same 10 body attributes as the Self-Objectification Questionnaire. However, because this is a measure of objectification

rather than self-objectification, the attributes were about other women's bodies instead of the participant's own body. This measure compared how they rank attributes pertaining to how other women's bodies look (e.g., "weight") vs. how other women's bodies function (e.g., "health"). Responses ranged from 1 (being most important) to 10 (being least important).

### **Other Measures**

***Motivations for Posting Photos.*** To assess the motivations for posting photos on social media sites, two different measures were created (see Appendix A for the full list of items). First, a ranking system for factors involved when posting pictures of oneself to social media was created. This scale consisted of 7 items and had participants rank motivations of why they post photos of themselves on social media sites, such as "How attractive I look" and "Who I expect to see the photo." Responses ranged from 1 (being most important) to 7 (being least important). Second, twelve additional items were created to assess further behaviors/attitudes towards social media, including desire for attention on social media, frequency of using social media, and types of posts on social media (e.g., "I post a lot of "selfies" on social media."). Responses ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

***Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.*** To assess how positively one views oneself, participants completed the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). This 10-item scale included statements such as "I have a positive attitude toward myself" ( $\alpha = .860$ ). Responses ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).

***Contingencies of Self-worth for Social Media.*** To assess the extent to which social media plays a role in one's self-esteem, the Contingencies of Self-Worth-Relationships measure (Crocker et al., 2003) was modified by replacing relationships aspects such as "significant other" to social media aspects such as "likes and comments." This 4-item subscale contained items such

as “I feel worthwhile when I receive many “likes” on a posted photo” ( $\alpha = .873$ ). Responses ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

**Demographics.** Participants reported their age, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender, and their relationship status. Taking into account sexual orientation, two of the measures, the Enjoyment of Sexualization scale and the Sex is power scale, incorporate statements that specifically relate to being heterosexual, so when participants indicated they were lesbian (N=1), they received slightly modified versions of these scales.

### **Coding Procedure**

Once all the data were collected and saved to the external hard-drive, the photos were coded on their degree of sexualization. A revised version of the Hatton and Trautner (2011) sexualization coding scheme was used to code the photos each participant screenshotted from their social media accounts. The scale consists of a point system with 14 categories that vary reflecting how self-sexualized a photo was. These categories include clothing/nudity, breast/chest, buttocks, genitals, legs/thighs, mouth, eyes, head vs. body shot, pose, self-taken photo, sex act, sexual role play, touch and hair (See Appendix B).

Two researchers coded the photos using a detailed 27-point coding protocol to establish strong inter-rater reliability. After initial coding, the averages of the two researchers' scores were computed and around 74% of the scores were within 3 points from each other. After discussion on which photos deviated more than 4 points from each other, those photos were recoded and then 98.2% of the sexualization scores were within 3 points from each other. The averages of the two researchers' scores were used as a variable in the analyses.

## Results

This study aimed to examine the motivations behind why women post sexualized photos of themselves on social media sites like Facebook and Instagram. We predicted that the motivations behind why women post sexualized photos of themselves were due to self-empowerment, rather than self-objectification. To analyze the data, Pearson's correlations among all the measures were computed. See Table 1 for descriptive statistics and Tables 2 and 3 for Pearson's Correlation between the degree of sexualization in the photos and all of the measures.

### **What are women's motivations for posting sexualized photos on social media?**

In this study we hypothesized that the degree of sexualization in the photos would correlate more with the empowerment measures. However, results showed that the sexualization in the photos did not correlate with either objectification or empowerment measures, nor any of the other measures, including self-esteem, enjoyment of sexualization, sex is power, shame, surveillance, self-objectification, objectification of other women, self-worth in social media, affection, communication, refusal, or desire (see Table 2). The only exception was a significant correlation between body acceptance and sexualization on Facebook,  $r = .39, p = .02$ .

In order to explore the motivations women have for posting sexualized photos, we ran correlations to test whether the degree of sexualization in the photographs correlated with the various motivation statements (see Table 3). Out of the 12 statements, sexualized Instagram photos correlated with the statement of "I post photos on social media to bring attention to myself",  $r = .37, p = .02$  and the statement "I post many photos to get more people to friend and/or follow me on social media",  $r = .36, p = .02$ . Out of the 12 statements, sexualized Facebook photos positively correlated with the statements "I try to look sexy in photos I post on social media",  $r = .55, p < .001$ , "I post photos on social media to promote an image of my personality",

$r = .41, p = .02$ , "I post photos on social media to bring attention to myself",  $r = .47, p = .01$ , and "I post many photos to get more people to friend and/or follow me on social media",  $r = .52, p = .01$ .

Given these findings, we ran a series of exploratory analyses to understand the differences between Facebook and Instagram and the ways in which participants may gain attention on these sites (i.e., likes and followers/friends). A paired samples *t*-test was run to compare participants who had both Facebook and Instagram profiles ( $n=32$ ) and whether their Instagram photos ( $M=4.44, SD=1.32$ ) or Facebook photos ( $M=3.97, SD=1.04$ ) were more sexualized. Results showed that Instagram photos were significantly more sexualized than Facebook photos,  $t(31)=2.53, p = .02$ . To further investigate why Instagram photos were significantly more sexualized compared to Facebook photos, a paired samples *t*-test was also run to assess participants who had both Facebook and Instagram profiles ( $n=32$ ) and whether they had more followers on Instagram ( $M=502.71, SD=392.07$ ) or more friends on Facebook ( $M=706.71, SD=338.58$ ). Results showed that participants had more Facebook friends than Instagram followers,  $t(31) = -3.04, p = .01$ . A further correlation was run to assess if having more followers/friends correlated with posting sexualized photos. Instagram followers and Instagram sexualized photos were positively correlated with each other,  $r = .42, p = .01$ , but Facebook was not,  $r = .15, p = .40$ .

Next, we analyzed the data to assess if the numbers of likes a participant's photo received correlated with how sexualized the photo was coded to be. Sexualized photos from both Facebook ( $n=35$ ) and Instagram ( $n=42$ ) were assessed. The sexualization score for each photograph was correlated with the number of likes for that photograph, and then the correlations were averaged for Facebook and for Instagram. The number of "likes" on a photo is not

correlated with sexualization on Facebook,  $r = .04$ ,  $p = .81$ , but it was for Instagram,  $r = .32$ ,  $p = .04$ .

Recall that participants ranked a number of factors as to how they choose photos to post on social media. Of the 7 factors listed, how attractive the participant looks in the photo was most often ranked as the most important factor when choosing a photo; 55.6% of the participants ranked it as most important. As hypothesized, the more participants considered how they look as a factor for photo selection, the more they staked their self-worth in social media,  $r = .42$ ,  $p = .01$ , felt shame about their bodies,  $r = .30$ ,  $p = .05$ , were more aware of internal body surveillance  $r = .52$ ,  $p = .001$ , and objectified other women,  $r = .34$ ,  $p = .04$ . Also, the contingencies of self-worth for social media correlated with enjoyment of sexualization,  $r = .44$ ,  $p = .01$ , and viewing sex as a form of power,  $r = .36$ ,  $p = .01$ .

### **Discussion**

In this study it was hypothesized that sexualized photos would correlate more with the empowerment measures, suggesting that women post sexualized photos of themselves due to a sense of self-empowerment, rather than self-objectification. However, none of the sexualized photos correlated with any of the objectification or empowerment measures in this study. The empowerment and objectification measures showed positive correlations with each other, but due to lack of correlations with the sexualized photos it is hard to say women's motivations for posting sexualized photos are due to either objectification or empowerment.

Participants' overall motivations for posting sexualized photos positively correlated with the statements of getting attention and more friends/followers. It indicates that women see themselves as sexual objects for viewers to judge through likes. This may be considered because the contingencies of self-worth when it comes to social media correlated with both the

objectification and empowerment measures, suggesting that women may post sexualized photos on social media due to a combination of both objectification and empowerment. Our findings found no correlation between self-esteem and self-sexualization on social media, contrary to a study done by Levy (2005) that found women who enjoy displaying their bodies and wearing tight clothing gain a high self-esteem and a sense of empowerment from their own and opposite sex due to the attention they receive. This suggests that there may be differences between self-sexualization on social media sites compared to real-life situations.

Results also show there may be differences in why women post more sexualized photos to Instagram compared to Facebook. This is considered to be because Instagram photos were more sexualized than Facebook photos, where both are social media sites used to share photos with friends and family. Another reason why this was believed is because it was observed that participants had more Facebook friends than Instagram followers. The sexualized photos not correlating with any of the measures may be due to the high range of the coding point scale, a small sample size, and the procedure of having the participant choose which photos to download. This specifically could have had an impact on whether participants truly choose the most recent photos posted and instead skipped downloading photos they believed to be inappropriate for the researcher to view.

The hypothesis that women who received more "likes" on their photos would be more likely to post sexualized photos of themselves on social media sites was supported. After reviewing the results further, the findings showed that the number of "likes" a photo received was correlated with sexualization of Instagram photos but not Facebook. On Facebook they may have more close family and friends who would scold them for posting sexualized pictures compared to Instagram where they may have free reign to post more sexualized photos. This may

also be due to a generation gap where older and younger people have Facebook profiles, but few older people have Instagram accounts compared to younger people. This was shown in a study conducted by Marketing Charts (2013) that found 43% of 18-29 year old people who have cell phones use Instagram, whereas only 18% of 30-49 year olds do. Again, the results suggest women may view the realms of Facebook and Instagram differently and therefore choose to post different degrees of self-sexualization on each.

The statement of ranking how attractive a woman looked as their top motivation for why they post photos on social media sites correlated with basing their self-worth in social media, shame, and body surveillance. With more than half of women in this study ranking this statement as their top consideration, this provides evidence that women perceive themselves as objects to be seen (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). These results imply that women post photos to self-objectify. This is similar to research conducted by Ruckel (2013), where being attractive and self-worth was correlated with sexualized Facebook profile photographs and participants expressed that their appearance is important to their self-worth, although we did not find the same correlation with the sexualized photos.

Confidence in engaging in sexual activities (i.e., sexual agency) was not correlated with sexualized photos, other than body acceptance. Women's confidence may not truly have an impact on women posting sexualized photos of themselves on social media sites. The lack of a correlation may be due to the idea that women's confidence while engaging or not engaging in sexual activities occurs in real life situations with another person or people, whereas social media sites are not and may give a "shield of safety" for women when choosing to post sexualized photos of themselves. Women may feel that they have a sense of control over the image that they project via social media, even though that image may not actually represent their true actions.

### **Future Research**

Researchers in the future should gather data from a larger sample size and collect more than the 10 photos from the participants' social media profiles in this study. It would be beneficial if researchers were given access to participants Facebook and Instagram profiles to then screenshot the photos themselves. This would hopefully remove any bias of appearing modest to the researcher by the participant and allow the researchers to screenshot the most recent photos posted. Measures specifically assessing the differences between Instagram and Facebook should also be used to see if there are truly any differences between posting more sexualized photos to Instagram compared to Facebook. Future research should further examine the specific cultures of Facebook versus Instagram, such as users' relationships to friends and followers on each platform. To go even further, researchers could examine other social media entertainment such as Snapchat.

### **Conclusion**

The sexualization of women has appeared in many forms of media where they are frequently portrayed as objects, having their self-worth depicted through their appearance (Moradi, & Huang, 2008). Social media sites where women can post sexualized photos of themselves are becoming more popular. This study brings forth the phenomenon of sexualization in women's social media photos. This is important since results showed women's motivations for posting sexualized photos were to gain attention and more friends/followers, and not necessarily objectification or empowerment. It is essential to find the root of this phenomenon so that we can reduce objectification in all media forums, providing the message that women are not objects to be used for sex, but assets to society as strong independent women.

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Table 1.

*Descriptive Statistics*

	<i>N</i>	Possible Range	Actual Range	Mean	Standard Deviation
Sexualized Instagram Photos	43	0 – 27	2 – 8.10	4.76	1.46
Sexualized Facebook Photos	34	0 – 27	1.95 -6.35	4.00	1.06
Sexualized Total Photos	45	0 – 27	2.21-7.65	4.58	1.35
Rank Motivation	45	1 – 7	1 – 7	2.22	1.76
Surveillance	45	1 – 6	1.75-5.38	3.78	.85
Shame	45	1 – 6	1.50-5.13	2.88	.94
Objectification of Self	45	1 – 10	-5.00-5.00	-1.11	2.69
Objectification of Other Women	43	1 – 10	-5.00-5.00	.18	3.33
Enjoyment of Sexualization	44	1 – 6	1.00-5.00	3.50	.91
Sex is Power	44	1 – 6	1.00-4.92	2.66	.90
Contingencies of Self-worth: Social Media	45	1 – 7	1.00-6.00	3.47	1.36
Self-esteem	45	1 – 4	1-4	3.11	.49
Desire	45	1 – 11	1 – 11	8.22	2.88
Affection	45	1 – 11	1 – 11	8.63	2.65
Communication	45	1 – 11	1 – 11	7.84	2.48
Acceptance	45	1 – 11	1 – 11	6.48	3.12
Refusal	45	1 – 11	1 – 11	8.54	2.86

Table 2

*How does self-sexualization on social media relate to objectification, empowerment, and self-esteem?*

	How attractive I look.	Surveillance	Shame	Objectification of Self	Objectification of Other Women	Enjoyment of Sexualization	Sex Is Power	Contingencies of Self-worth: Social Media	Self-esteem	Desire	Affection	Communication	Refusal	Acceptance
Sexualized Total	.20	.02	.05	.21	.04	.21	.04	.12	.01	.03	.05	-.08	.07	.06
Sexualized Facebook Photos	.14	-.03	-.04	.08	-.09	.25	-.03	.13	.22	.19	.24	.08	-.04	.39*
Sexualized Instagram Photos	.21	.01	.04	.20	-.01	.23	.09	.10	-.01	.08	.09	-.02	.01	.04
Motivation for why I post photos on social media: How attractive I look.	-	.52**	.30*	.27	.34*	.27	.43**	.41**	-.01	-.05	-.02	-.07	-.06	.10
Surveillance	.52**	-	.66**	.39**	.27	.46**	.32*	.46**	-.19	-.02	-.11	-.04	-.12	-.29*
Shame	.30*	.66**	-	.34*	.12	.46**	.35*	.35*	-.43**	-.04	-.07	-.02	-.16	-.39**
Objectification of Self	.27	.39**	.34*	-	.01	.19	.27	.07	-.43**	-.13	-.21	-.16	-.19	-.20
Objectification of Other Women	.34*	.27	.12	.01	-	-.08	.27	.17	-.15	-.29	-.47**	-.42**	-.39**	-.31*
Enjoyment of Sexualization	.27	.46**	.46**	.19	-.08	-	.42**	.44**	.16	.38*	.10	.19	-.08	.21
Sex Is Power	.43**	.32*	.35*	.27	.27	.42**	-	.36*	-.16	.06	-.21	-.02	-.21	-.04
Contingencies of Self-worth: Social Media	.41**	.46**	.35*	.07	.17	.44**	.36*	-	-.10	-.22	-.20	-.22	-.17	-.31*
Self-esteem	-.01	-.19	-.43**	-.43**	-.15	-.16	-.16	-.10	-	.41**	.47**	.41**	.34*	.59**
Desire	-.05	-.02	-.04	-.13	-.29	.38*	.06	-.22	.41**	-	.75**	.86**	.49**	.76**
Affection	-.02	-.11	-.07	-.21	-.47**	.10	-.21	-.20	.42**	.75**	-	.86**	.83**	.56**
Communication	-.07	-.04	-.02	-.16	-.42**	.19	-.02	-.22	.41**	.86**	.86**	-	.78**	.66**
Refusal	-.06	-.12	-.16	-.19	-.39**	-.08	-.21	-.17	.34*	.49**	.83**	.78**	-	.42**
Acceptance	.10	-.29*	-.39**	-.20	-.31*	.21	-.04	-.31*	.59**	.76**	.56**	.66**	.42**	-

Note: †p<.10, \*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

Table 3

*What motivates women to post self-sexualizing photos on social media?*

		I want to appear attractive in the photos I post on social media.	I rarely post photos of myself on social media.	I try to look sexy in photos I post on social media.	I take photos down from social media if they do not get a lot of "likes".	I post photos on social media to promote an image of my personality.	I post photos on social media to stay connected to my friends and family.	I post photos on social media to bring attention to myself.	I post many photos to get more people to friend and/or follow me on social media.	I enjoy using Facebook.	I enjoy using Instagram.	
Descriptive Statistics	<i>M</i> =2.80 <i>SD</i> =1.55	<i>M</i> =4.31 <i>SD</i> =1.83	<i>M</i> =2.47 <i>SD</i> =1.49	<i>M</i> =5.42 <i>SD</i> =1.31	<i>M</i> =2.22 <i>SD</i> =1.48	<i>M</i> =4.57 <i>SD</i> =1.69	<i>M</i> =2.20 <i>SD</i> =1.44	<i>M</i> =5.75 <i>SD</i> =1.35	<i>M</i> =2.67 <i>SD</i> =1.61	<i>M</i> =2.42 <i>SD</i> =1.70	<i>M</i> =5.60 <i>SD</i> =1.14	<i>M</i> =6.11 <i>SD</i> =.94
Sexualized Instagram Photos	.276	-.178	-.129	.205	.070	.123	.155	-.221	.370*	.362*	-.090	.079
Sexualized Facebook Photos	.554***	.131	-.196	.142	.067	.412*	.290	-.020	.466**	.519**	-.241	.091
Total Sexualized Photos	.292	-.151	-.145	.209	.061	.162	.248	-.201	.370*	.403**	-.177	.094

Note: †*p*<.10, \**p*<.05, \*\**p*<.01, \*\*\**p*<.001

## Appendix A

### Rank Motivation Measure

When posting photos of oneself on social media, there are multiple factors to consider when choosing a photo. Below is a list of factors that people may consider when selecting a photo of themselves to post on social media.

Please rank which factors below are most important to you when you post photos of yourself on social media, with 1 being the most important and 7 being the least important. (Some of these factors might be equally important to you or it might depend on the specific photo, but do your best to rank them anyway.)

- 1 How attractive I look.
- 2 Where I am in the photo (e.g., scenic area, on vacation, etc.)
- 3 Who I am with in the photo.
- 4 What I am doing in the photo.
- 5 Who I expect to see the photo.
- 6 How "popular" the photo will be. (e.g., number of "likes" or comments expected)
- 7 How funny the photo is.

### Additional Social Media Items

Please indicate below how much you agree or disagree to each of these statements listed below.

1. I try to look sexy in photos I post on social media.
2. I post a lot of "selfies" on social media.
3. I rarely post photos of myself on social media.
4. I want to appear attractive in the photos I post on social media.
5. I take photos down from social media if they do not get a lot of "likes".
6. I post photos on social media to promote an image of my personality.
7. I post photos on social media to get people to like me.
8. I post photos on social media to stay connected to my friends and family.
9. I post photos on social media to bring attention to myself.
10. I post many photos to get more people to friend and/or follow me on social media.
11. I enjoy using Facebook.
12. I enjoy using Instagram.

**Appendix B**

Coding Procedure

Each researcher will code the 10 profile pictures downloaded from each participant social media profile. Once two researchers have coded each of the 10 photos, the two scores will be averaged.

Coding for each picture will consists of these 14 categories:

Clothing/nudity: 0-3 point scale (modified to a 3 point scale)

Points:	0	1	2	3
Criteria	Unrevealing clothing; professional attire	Slightly to somewhat revealing; showing some skin, short clothing/dresses; low necklines	Highly revealing: skin tight clothing; tubetops; exposed midriffs; exposed cleavage	Extremely revealing: bathing suit/lingerie

Breast/chest: 0-2 points

Points:	0	1	2
Criteria:	Breasts/chest were not visible in the photo	Breasts/chest were slightly exposed (low necklines)	Breasts/chest were extremely exposed and were the focal point

Buttocks: 0-2 points

Points	0	1	2
Criteria:	Buttocks not visible/not focal point of the photo	Buttocks were somewhat a focal point of the photo (standing sideways with buttocks sticking out)	Buttocks were a major focal point in the photo (backward facing photo)

## Genitals: 0-2 points

Points:	0	1	2
Criteria:	Genital area was not the focal point of the photo	Genital area was slightly a focal point of the photo (genitals covered but legs slightly spread)	Genital area was a major focal point of the photo (pants unbuttoned, pulled down, legs spread open)

## Legs/thighs: 0-2 points

Points:	0	1	2
Criteria:	Legs were not visible (wearing pants/sitting down in pants/legs were covered)	Legs were slightly exposed (some of leg/thigh showing)	Legs were extremely exposed (short dress, short shorts with legs spread)

## Mouth: 0-2 points

Points:	0	1	2
Criteria:	No suggestive sexual activity (closed lips, broad toothy smile, active singing, talking, or yelling)	Slightly suggestive sexual activity (kissy face/duck face)	Explicitly suggestive of sexual activity (mouths wide open, tongue showing or sticking out, something in mouth like a finger)

## Eyes: 0-1 points

Points:	0	1
Criteria:	Not sexy/seductive	Are sexy/seductive (big dreamy, sultry, winks, hooded eyes, bedroom eyes)

Head vs. body shot: 0-1 points (Modified to a 0-2 point scale)

Points:	0	1	2
Criteria:	Body was not the focal point in the photo (smile was the focal point, body not in the photo); scenery is the focus	Body/body parts are in the photo, but not the focal point	Majority of body/body parts were the focal point in the photo (showing off body/whole body)

Pose: 0-3 points

Points:	0	1	2	3
Criteria:	Not being posed in any kind of sexual way	“flirty pose” (hand on hip, leg cocked)	Somewhat sexually suggestive or certain body parts (showing off breasts, butt, thighs, etc.)	Overtly posed for sexual activity (lying down, legs spread, representing a sexual invitation)

Self-taken: 0 to 2 points

Points:	0	1	2
Criteria:	Not self-taken; someone else took the photo	If the photo has the participant and others in it	If the photo is of the participant themselves (selfie); (self-objectifying)

Sex act: 0-1 points

Points:	0	1
Criteria:	The participant is not engaging in a sexual act in the photo	The participant is engaging in a sexual act in the photo. (May include kissing, hugging, masturbation/acting out the sexual act)

Sexual role play: 0-1 points

Points:	0	1
Criteria	The participant was not engaged in sexual role play in the photo	The participant was engaged in sexual role play in the photo (dressing up in child-like clothes, bondage/domination)

Touch 0-2 points (modified 1 point to add in self-touching)

Points:	0	1	2
Criteria:	Not being touched/touching another person in a nonsexual way (touching shoulder to shoulder)	Some suggestive touching (hands on waist of another person); self-touching	Explicit sexual touching (oneself or another, hands touching breasts/buttocks/genitals, etc.)

Hair 0-2 points (added in this category)

Points:	0	1	2
Criteria:	Hair is not done (curled, straightened, etc.); and is out of face (bun, ponytail, etc.)	Hair is done (curled straightened, etc.) and is out of face	Hair is done; is down, surrounding the face; flipped in motion; actively using hair; makes body/face the focal point