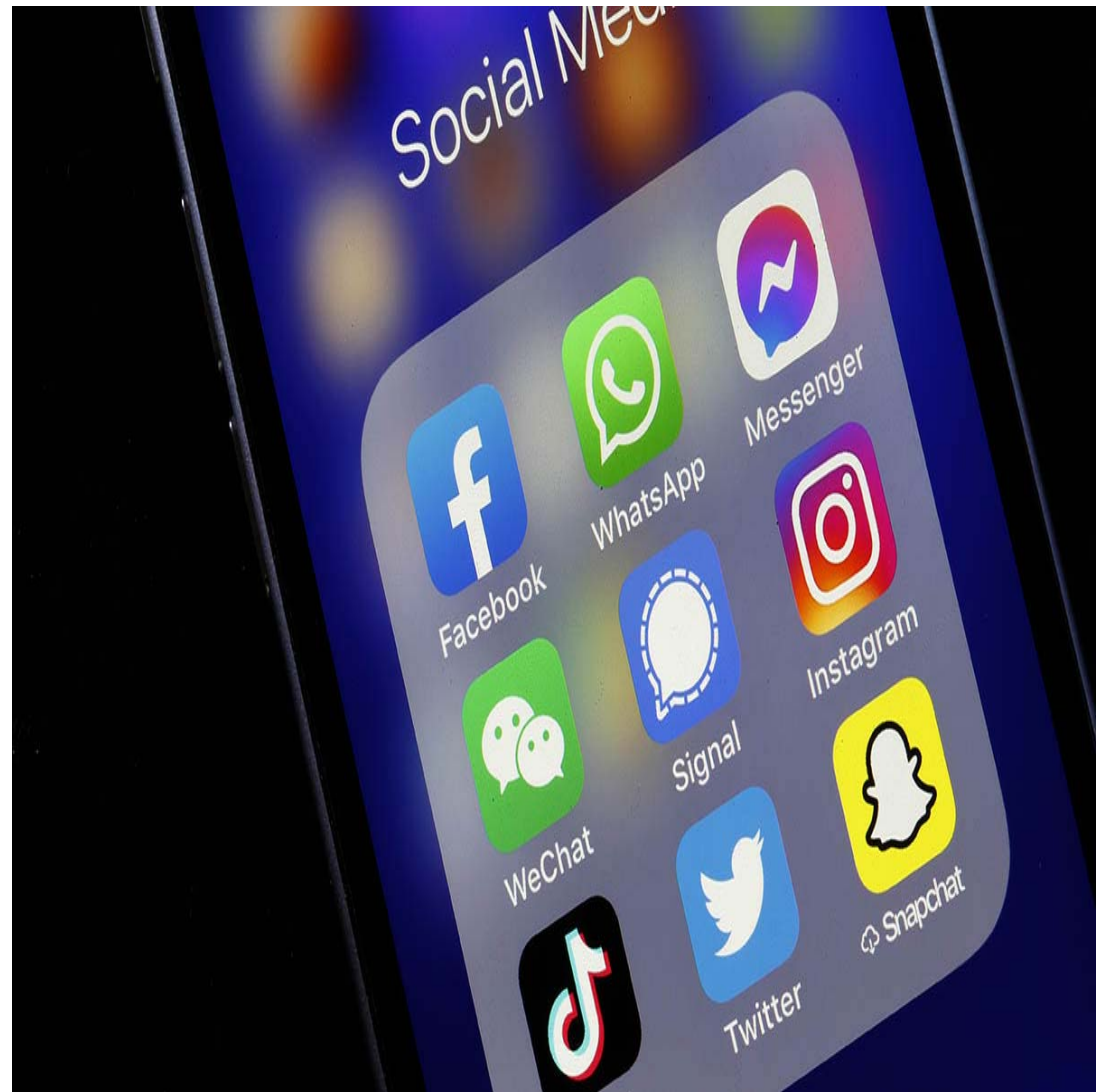


# THE SEXY LANDSCAPE: YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IN A SEXUALIZED ENVIRONMENT

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Elizabeth A. Daniels, Ph.D.  
University of Colorado Colorado Springs





# MEDIA USE

How much time do you think the average teen spends engaged with media in a day? (media = TV/movies, video games, social media, music videos, etc.)

# MEDIA USE

## Preteens (ages 8-12 years):

- Total entertainment screen use = 5 hours, 33 minutes

## Teens (ages 12-18 years):

- Total entertainment screen use = 8 hours, 39 minutes

# MEDIA USE

Preteens (ages 12-18 years)

- Total entertainment screen use hours, 33 minutes



ages 12-18 years):

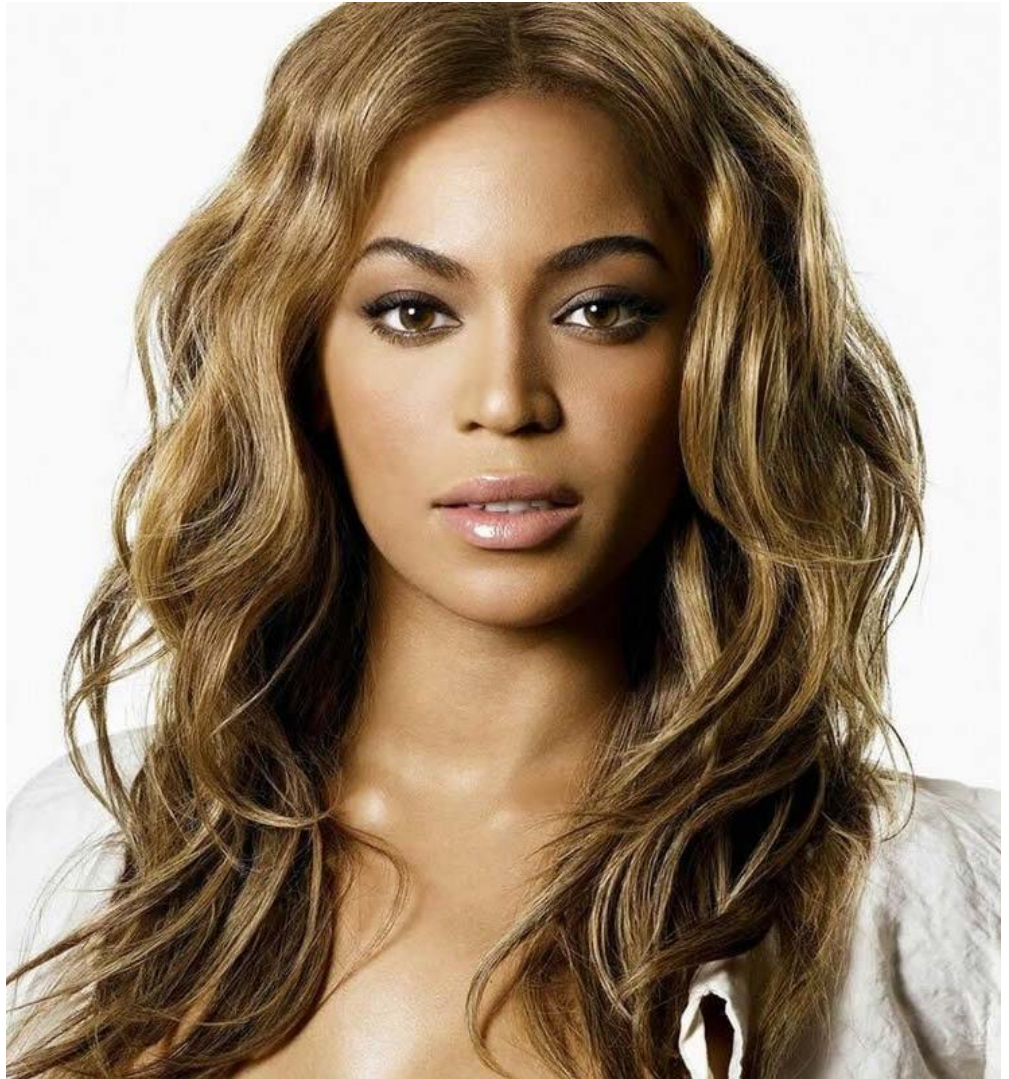
entertainment  
use = 8  
39 minutes

# WHO IS IN THE MEDIA?

Who are the women we see in the media?

How are women depicted in media?





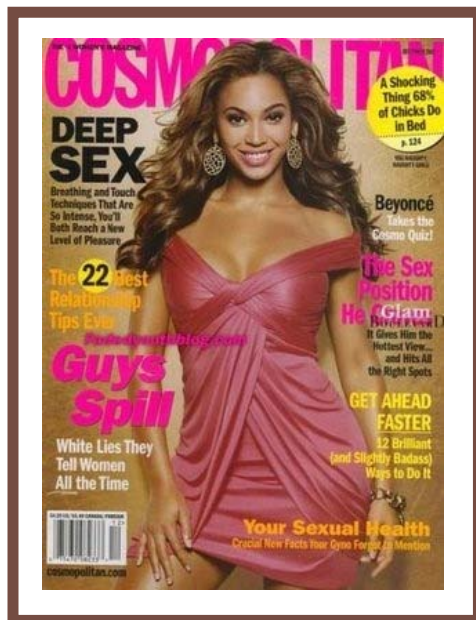
The  
**100** Most Powerful Women  
in Technology **2020**



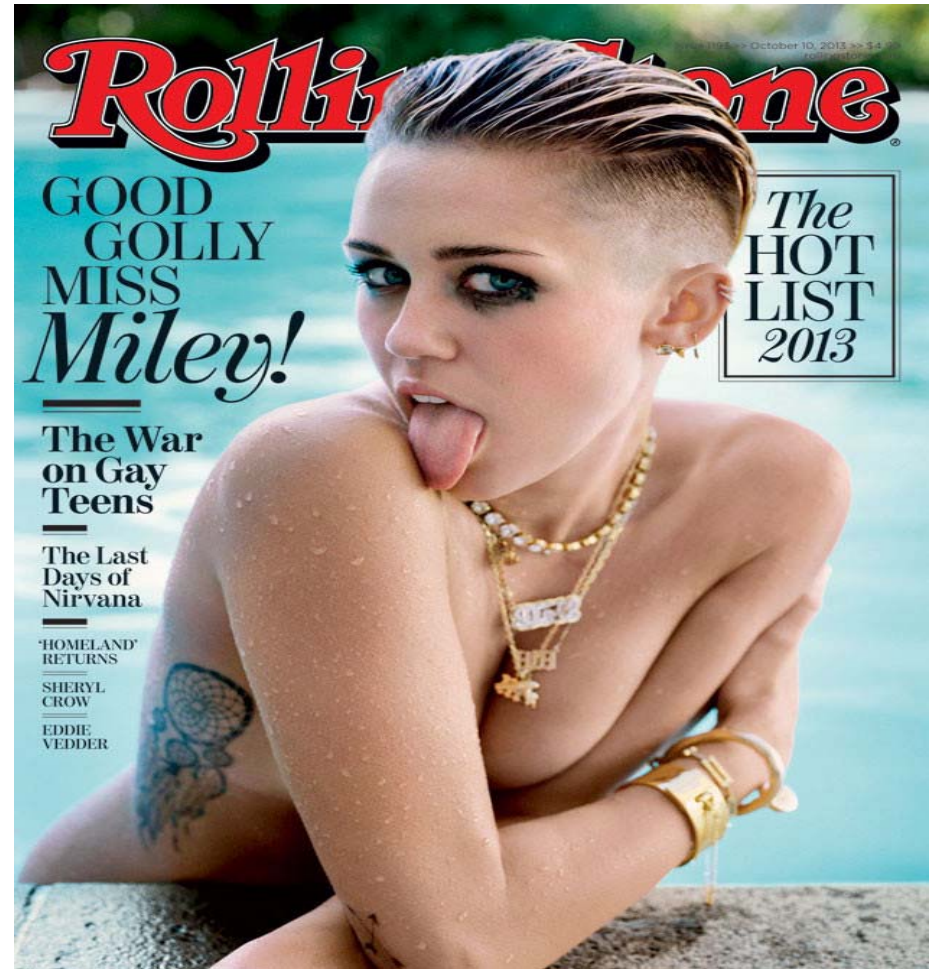
 Analytics Insight











Hatton & Trautner, 2011









Bratz dolls



Monster High dolls



#### Objectification:

- Ultra-thinness
- Very short skirts
- High-heeled shoes/boots
- Fishnet stockings
- Lingerie bodice
- Heavy make-up
- Sexualized poses

# THE SEXY LANDSCAPE

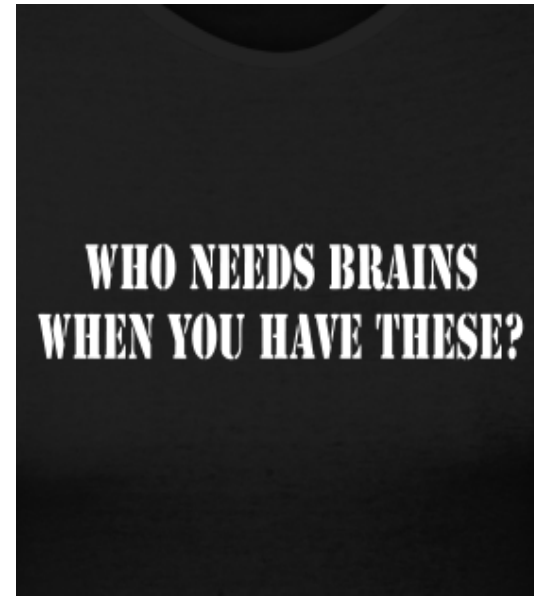


"Unleash the sex kitten inside...simply extend the Peekaboo pole inside the tube, slip on the sexy tunes and away you go!"

# THE SEXY LANDSCAPE



Panties Wal-Mart sold in their junior's section until protest by Feministing.com



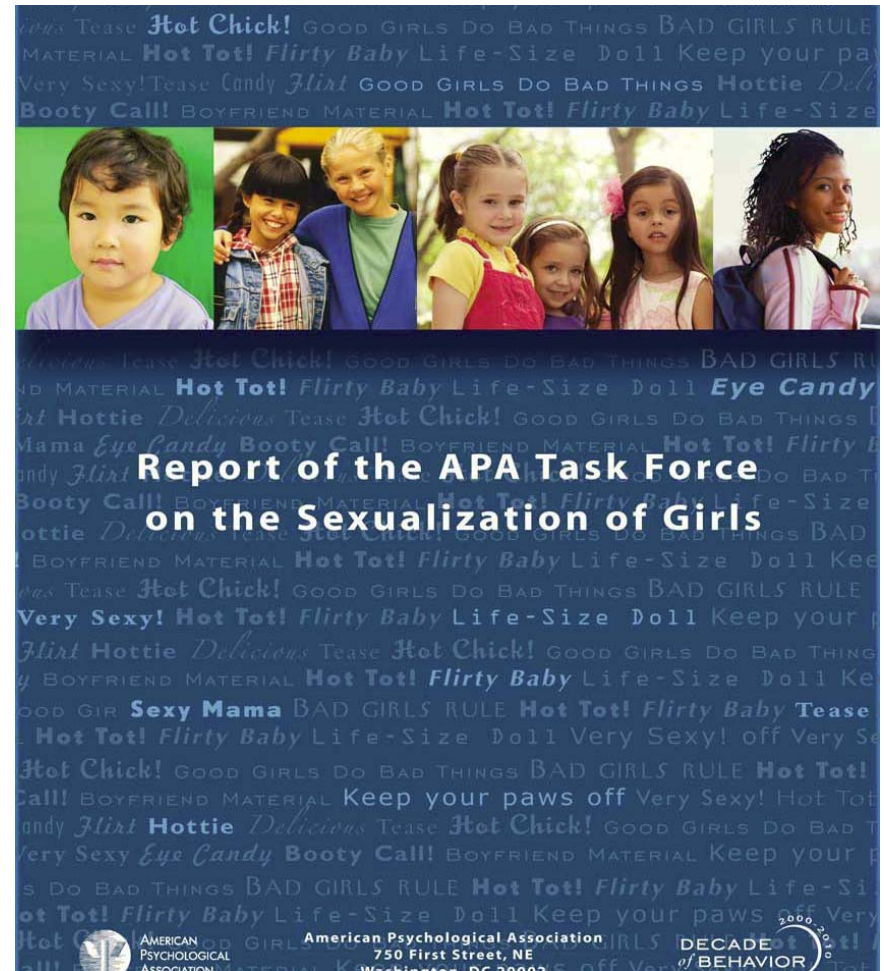
Teen girls in Penn "girl-cotted" Abercrombie and Fitch's T-shirt in 2005



# WHAT IS SEXUALIZATION?

Occurs when (APA, 2007):

- A person's value comes only from his/her sexual appeal or behavior to the exclusion of other characteristics;
- A person is sexually objectified, i.e., made into a thing for others' sexual use, rather than seen as a person;
- Sexuality is inappropriately imposed upon a person







## OBJECTIFICATION THEORY

Girls and women internalize an observer's perspective as a primary means to view their own bodies (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; McKinley & Hyde, 1996)

How I APPEAR vs. what I can DO



HOW DOES SEXUAL  
OBJECTIFICATION  
IMPACT GIRLS AND  
WOMEN?

# OBJECTIFICATION THEORY MODEL

Roberts, T.-A. et al. (2018).  
Objectification theory: Continuing  
contributions to feminist psychology. In C.  
B. Travis, J. W. White, A. Rutherford, W.  
S. Williams, S. L. Cook, & K. F. Wyche  
(Eds.), *APA handbook of the psychology  
of women: History, theory, and  
battlegrounds.*, Vol. 1. (pp. 249–271).  
American Psychological Association.

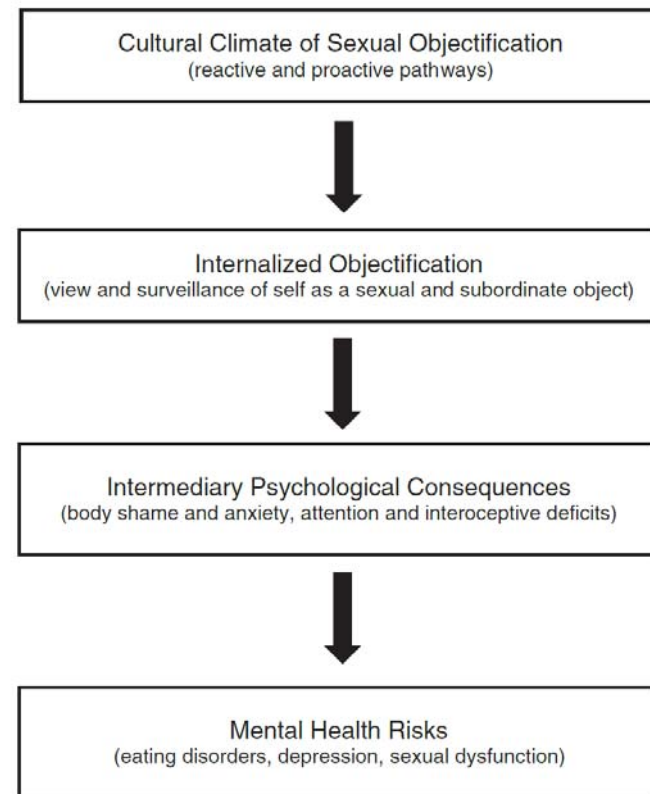


FIGURE 13.1. Original postulates of the objectification theory model proposed by Fredrickson and Roberts (1997).

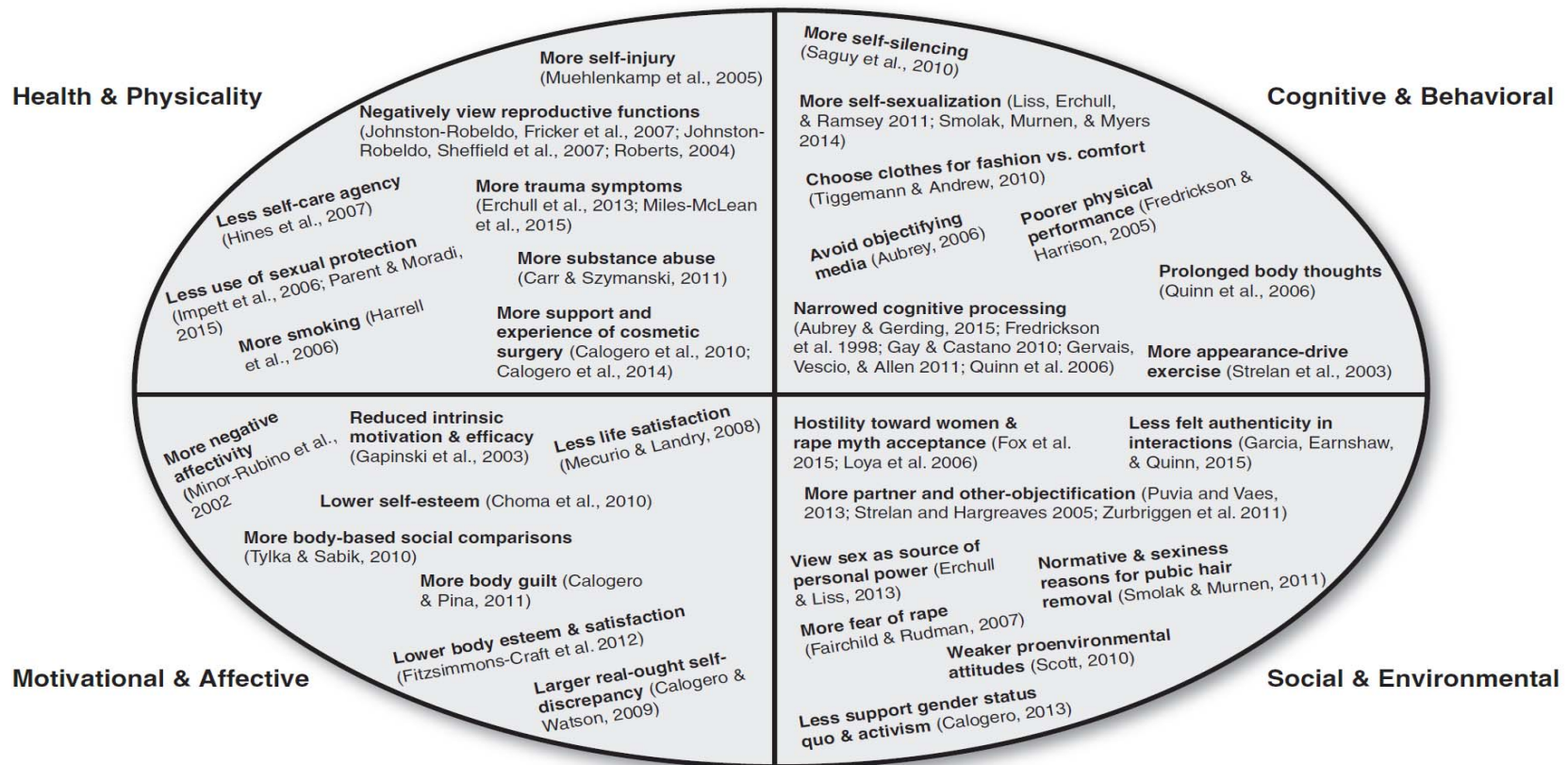


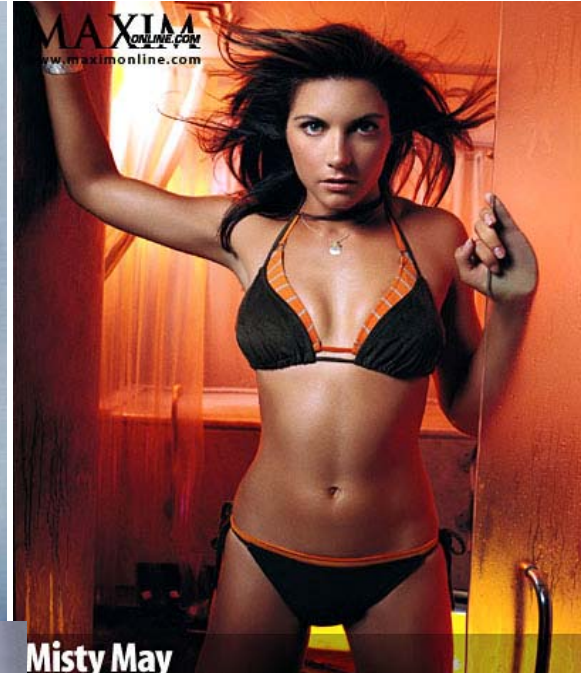
FIGURE 13.2. Snapshot of expanded literature on correlates and outcomes of self-objectification.

Roberts, T.-A. et al. (2018). Objectification theory: Continuing contributions to feminist psychology. In C. B. Travis, J. W. White, A. Rutherford, W. S. Williams, S. L. Cook, & K. F. Wyche (Eds.), *APA handbook of the psychology of women: History, theory, and battlegrounds., Vol. 1.* (pp. 249–271). American Psychological Association.





PHOTO: DOUGLAS BIZZARO AND ELIZABETH MCGLATH



MAXIM  
ONLINE.COM  
www.maximonline.com



FHM  
ONLINE.COM  
www.fhmus.com



Misty May  
FHM  
www.fhmus.com



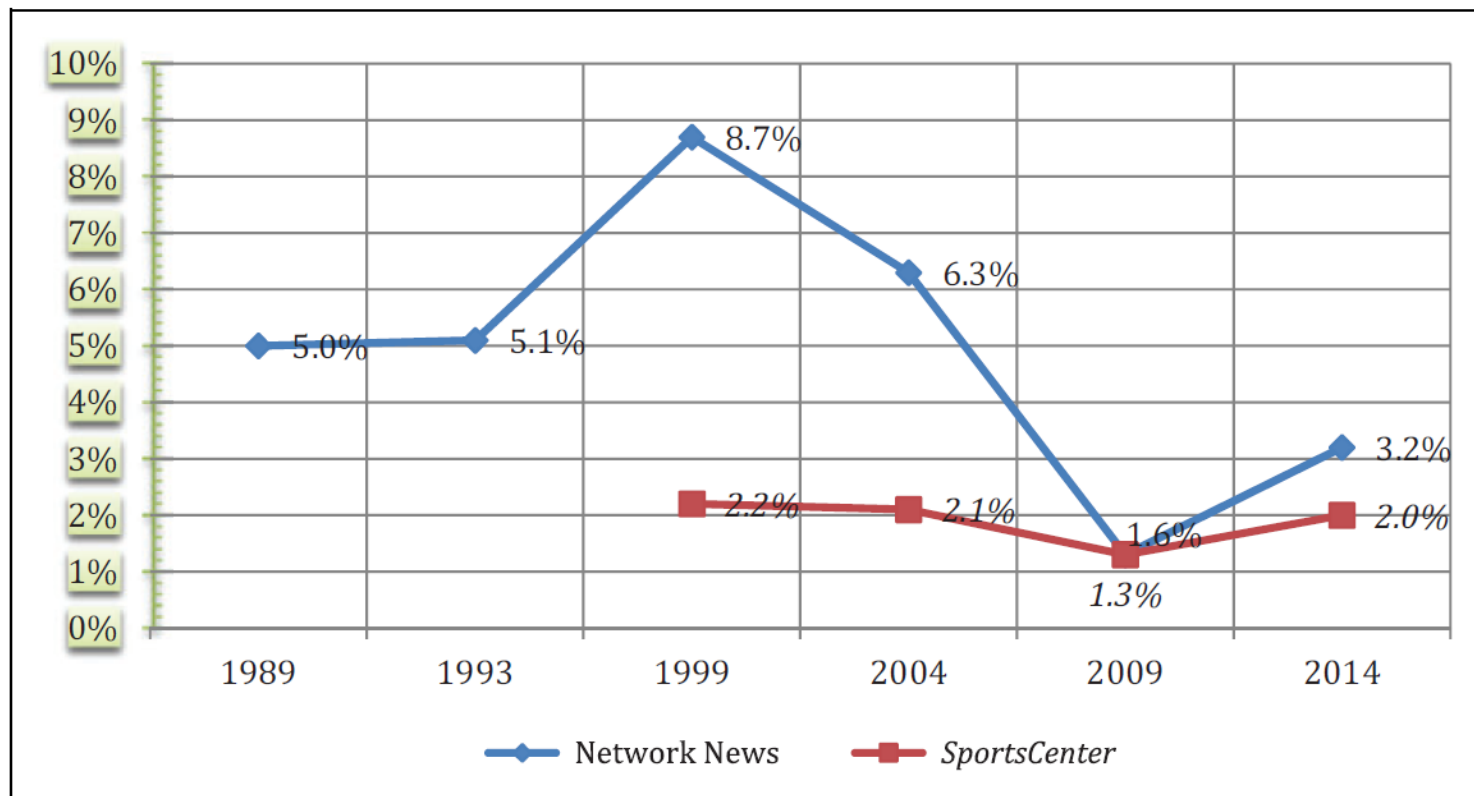
PHOTOGRAPHED FOR FHM BY ANDREW PARSONS

# THREE PATTERNS MEDIA COVERAGE OF WOMEN'S SPORTS

INVISIBILITY

LESS SOPHISTICATED AND  
EXCITING PRODUCTION  
TECHNIQUES

EMPHASIS ON SEXUAL AND  
PHYSICAL ATTRACTIVENESS



**Figure 2.** Main coverage of women's sports (percentage), 1989–2014.

(Cooky, Messner, & Musto, 2015)





Slow motion  
Multiple camera angles  
Multiple types of shots



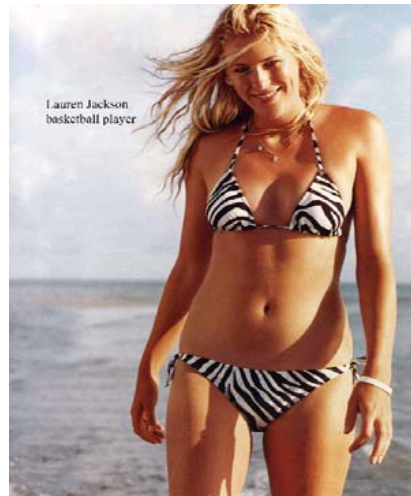


# MY RESEARCH PROGRAM: IN A STUDY... (DANIELS, 2009)

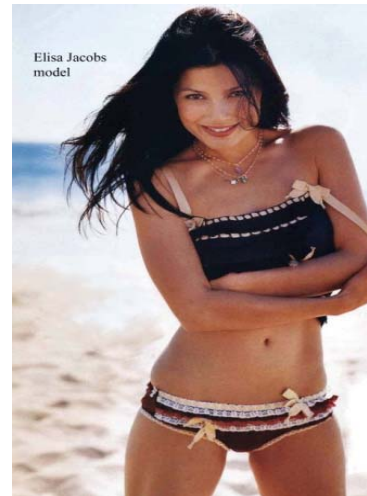
343 teen girls and 223 college women viewed 1 of 4 possible sets of photographs



In-action athletes



Sexualized athletes



Sexualized models



Non-sexualized models

## YOUR TURN

I'm going to show you some photographs and ask you to...

Complete the sentence "I am \_\_\_\_\_" as if you were your teenage self — describing yourself to yourself, not somebody else.

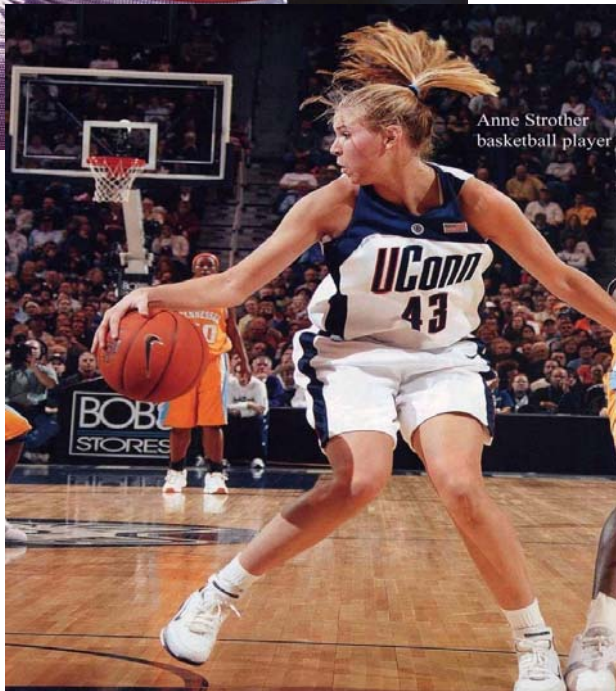
I am\_\_\_\_\_.

I am\_\_\_\_\_.

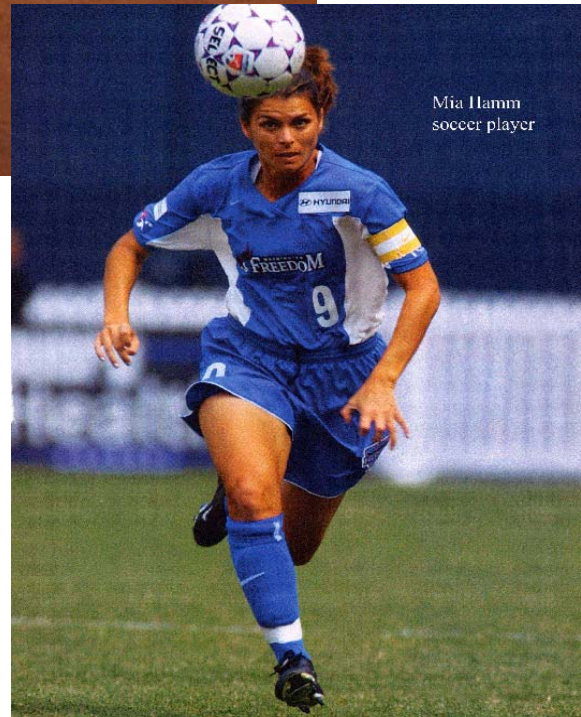
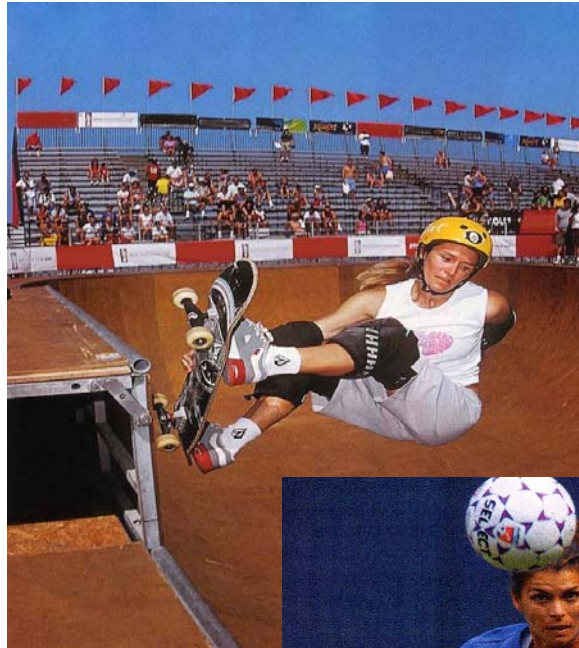
I am\_\_\_\_\_.

I am\_\_\_\_\_.

I am\_\_\_\_\_.

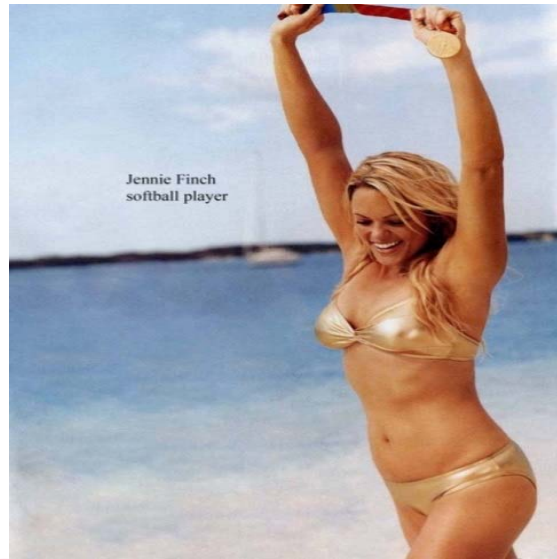


Anne Strother  
basketball player

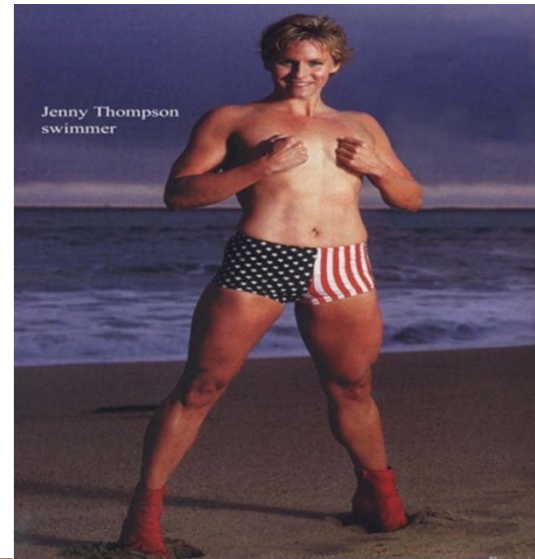


Mia Hamm  
soccer player

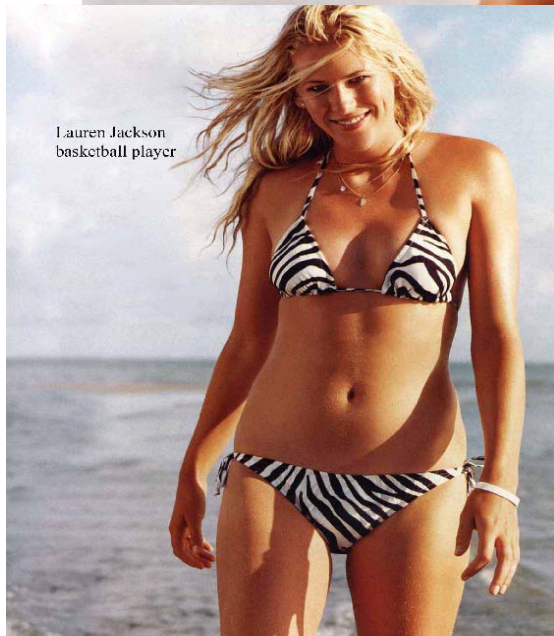




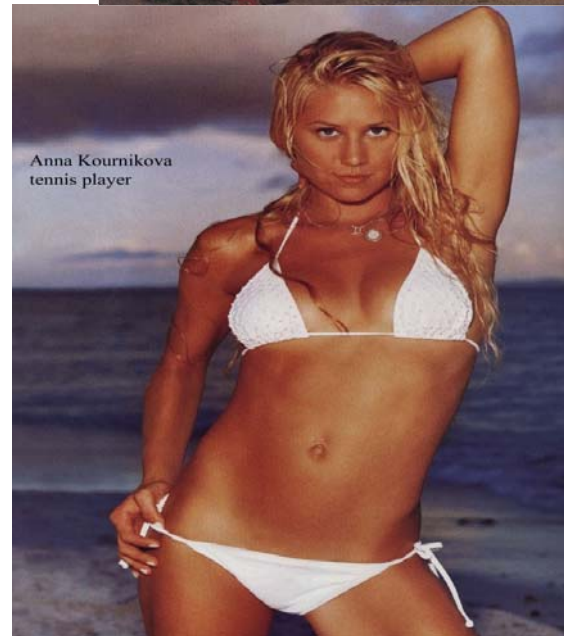
Jennie Finch  
softball player



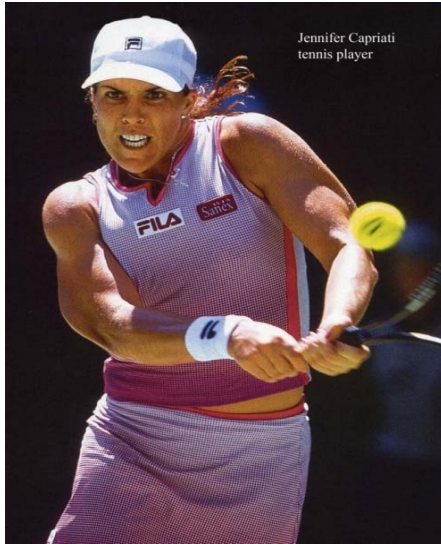
Jenny Thompson  
swimmer



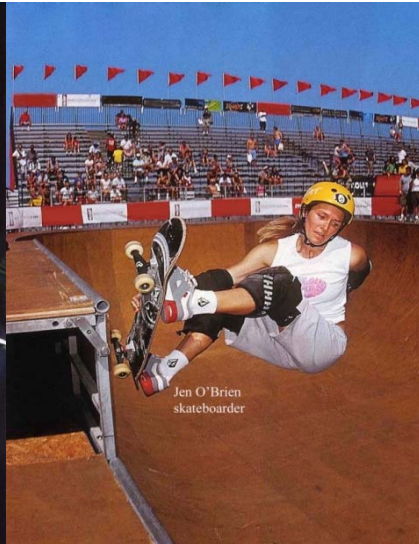
Lauren Jackson  
basketball player



Anna Kournikova  
tennis player

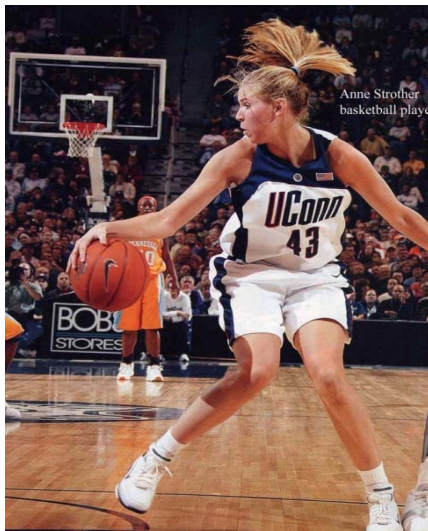


Jennifer Capriati  
tennis player

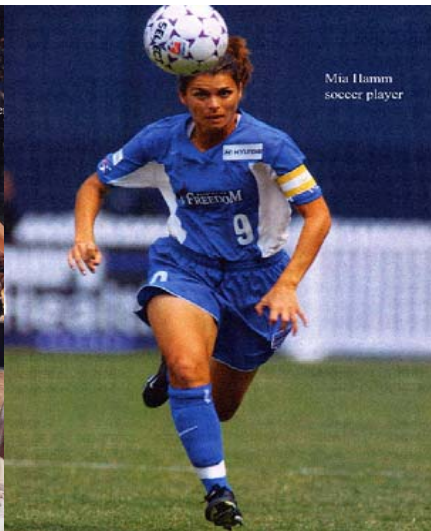


Jen O'Brien  
skateboarder

In-action athletes  
Instrumental focus



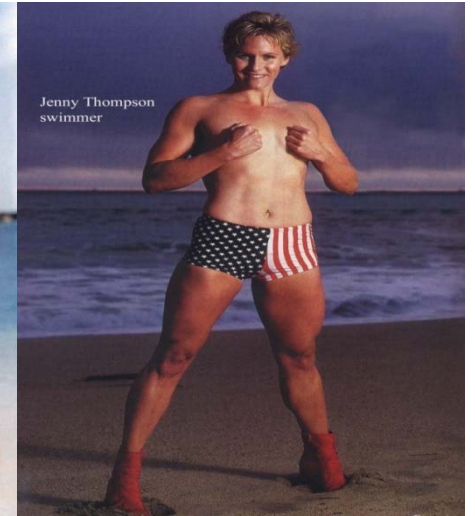
Anne Strother  
basketball player



Mia Hamm  
soccer player

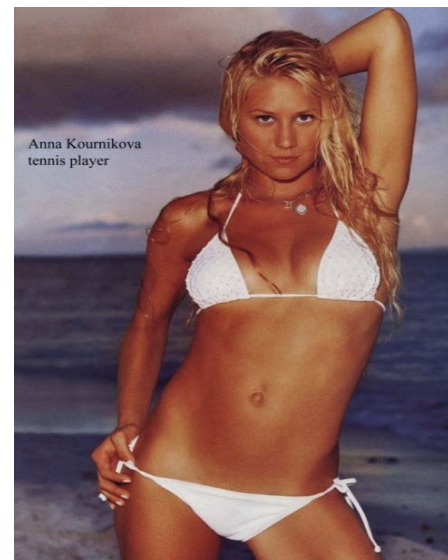


Jennie Finch  
softball player

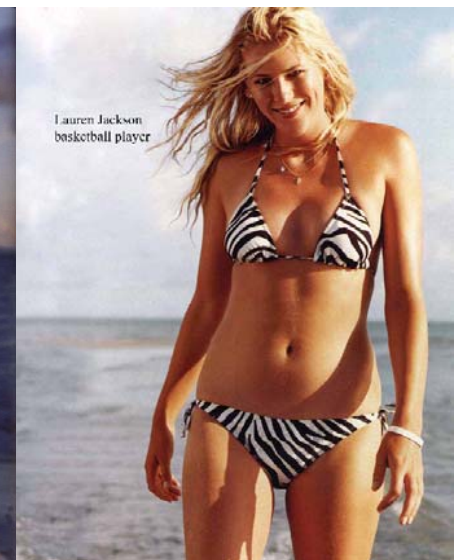


Jenny Thompson  
swimmer

Sexualized athletes  
Objectified focus



Anna Kournikova  
tennis player

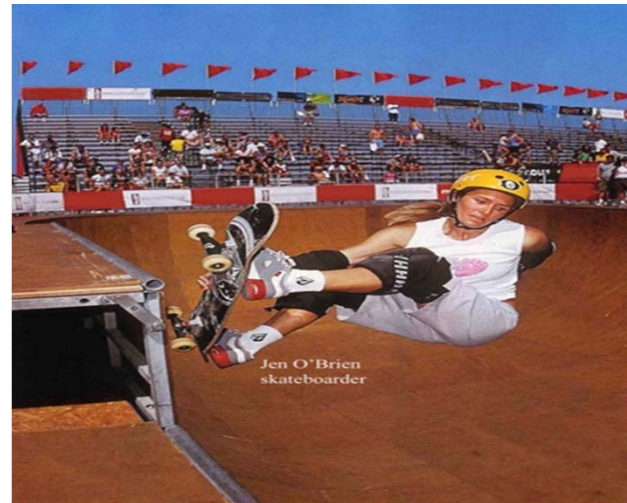


Lauren Jackson  
basketball player

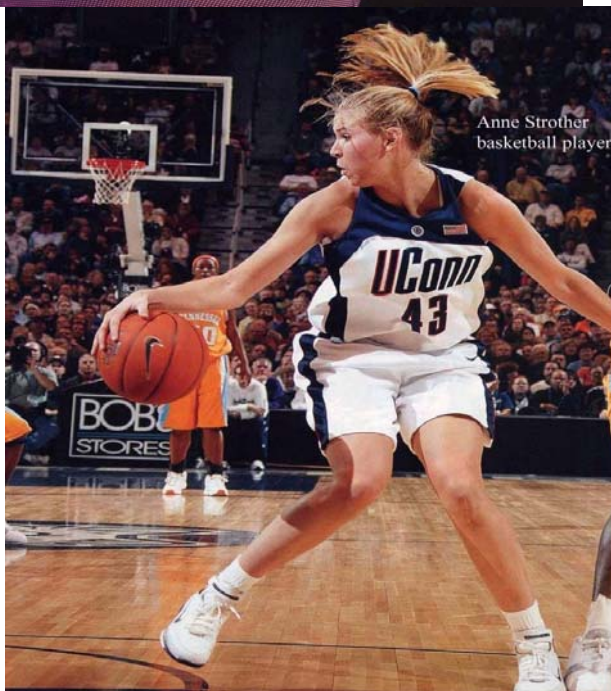




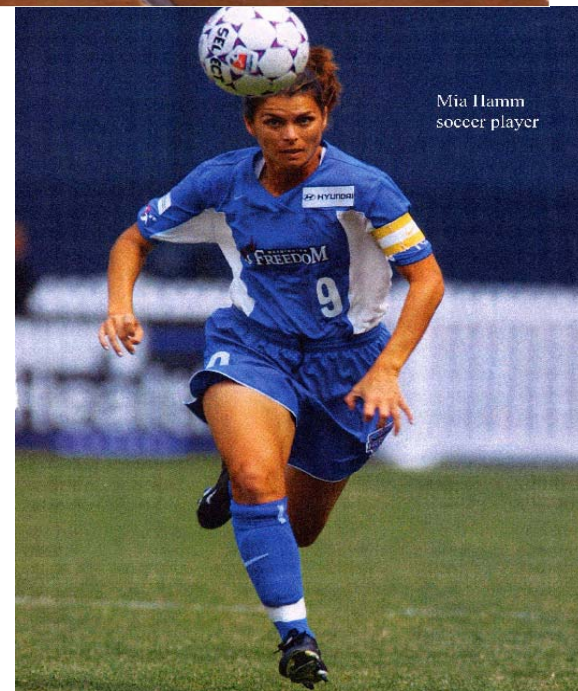
Jennifer Capriati  
tennis player



Jen O'Brien  
skateboarder



Anne Strother  
basketball player



Mia Hamm  
soccer player



Powerful, able, strong, tough,  
a great dancer, energetic  
-- 14-year-old  
multiple ethnicities


Strong, a tennis  
player, a skier, a  
dancer, tough  
-- 13-year-old  
European-  
American

Energetic most of the time,  
pretty good at some  
sports, a dancer  
-- 16-year-old  
European-American

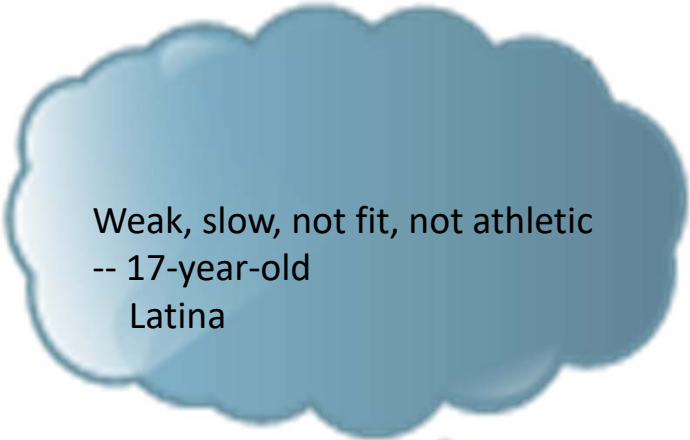

A good soccer player, a  
somewhat good dancer, a good  
athletic person, a good hiker  
especially backpacking  
-- 15-year-old  
Latina

A dancer, strong, hyper,  
flexible  
-- 14-year-old  
European-American


# Not all good...



Lazy, weak, bad at most  
sports  
-- 13-year-old  
European-American



Weak, slow, not fit, not athletic  
-- 17-year-old  
Latina

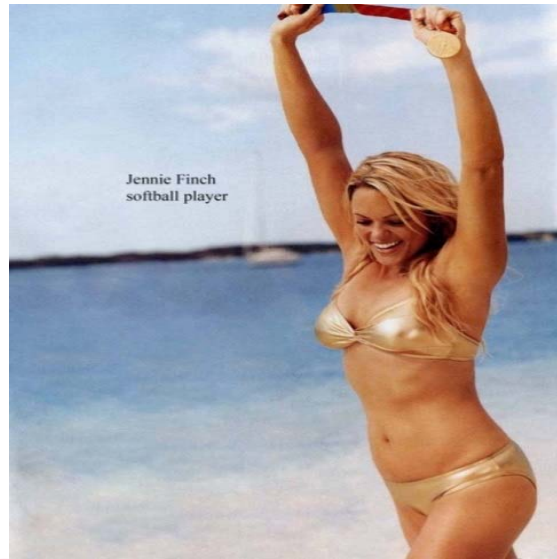


## ON AVERAGE

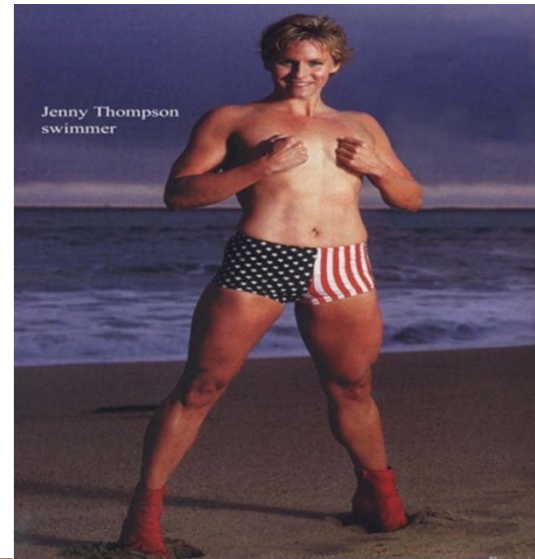
After seeing in-action athletes, girls and college women described themselves in terms of their physical abilities/skills.

- Mostly positive self-descriptions

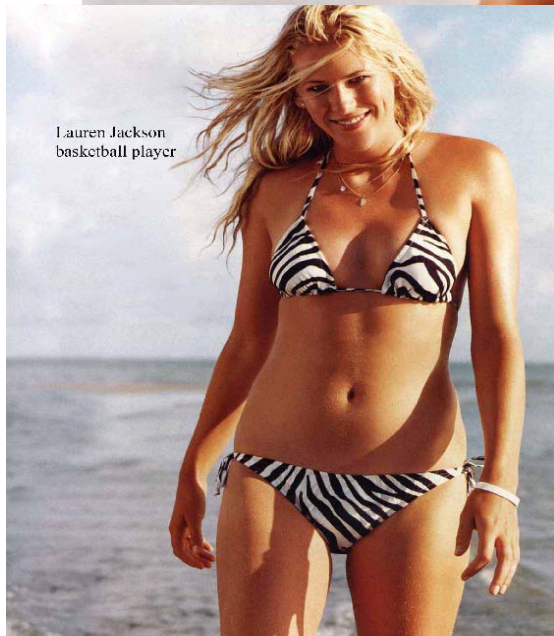




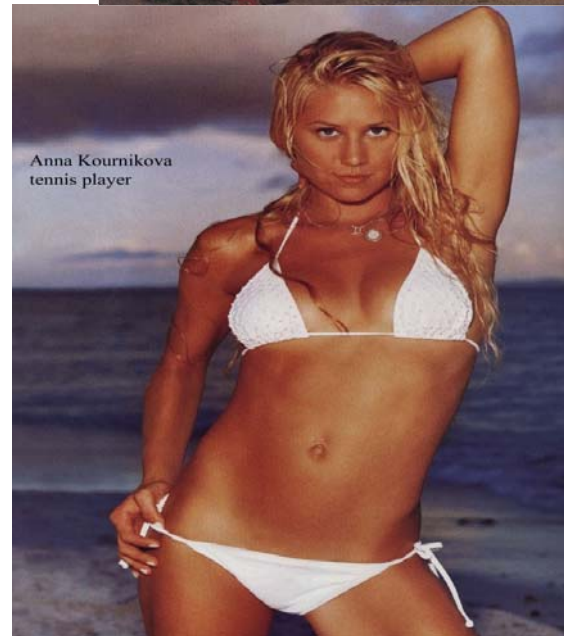
Jennie Finch  
softball player



Jenny Thompson  
swimmer



Lauren Jackson  
basketball player



Anna Kournikova  
tennis player

Fat, not toned, not  
getting in a bathing suit,  
flabby

-- 15-year-old  
European-American

Big, fat, obese,  
chunky, large, wide,  
huge

-- 15-year-old  
Latina

Never going to look as  
pretty as the girls in  
the photos

-- 15-year-old  
multiple ethnicities

Fat, chunky, really fat,  
overweight, obese, hippo  
pig, fat

-- 16-year-old  
Latina

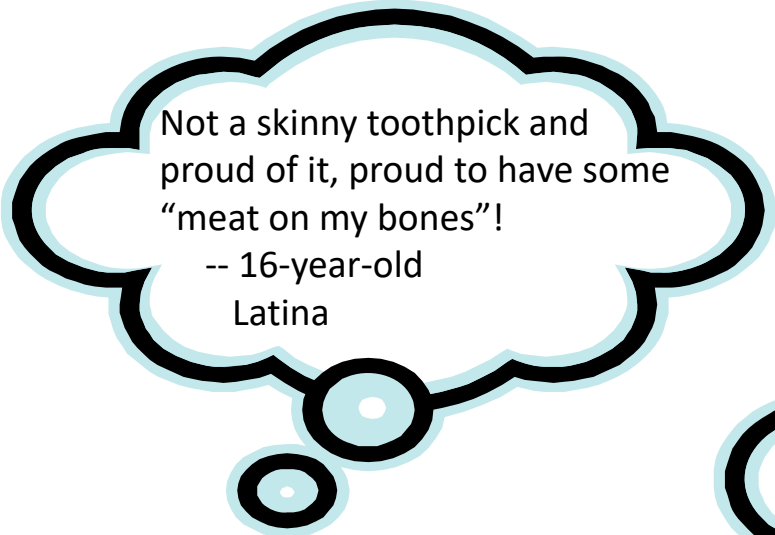
Ugly, not worth looking at,  
never going to wear the  
clothes that I want

-- 16-year-old  
Persian

The ugliest girl  
in the world


-- 16-year-old  
Latina

# Not all bad...



Not a skinny toothpick and  
proud of it, proud to have some  
“meat on my bones”!

-- 16-year-old  
Latina



Pretty, beautiful, hot,  
sexy, fashionable  
-- 16-year-old  
European-American



## ON AVERAGE

After seeing sexualized athletes, girls and college women described themselves in terms of their physical appearance.

- Mostly negative self-descriptions

Same pattern for sexualized models

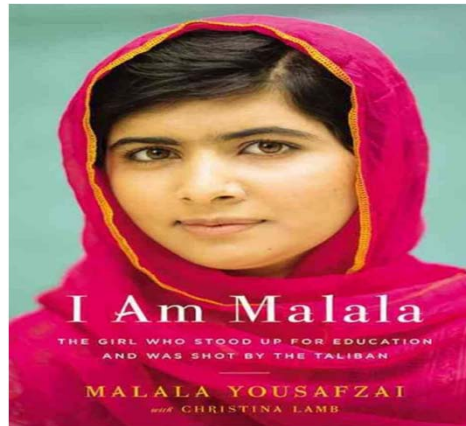
## WHAT DO GIRLS SAY ABOUT THESE IMAGES?

Performance athlete: “In this photo, Mia Hamm runs her heart out for the love of one game. Although I’m not a soccer player, this gives me a sense of determination to achieve my goal even if it doesn’t involve a soccer ball. This photo represents woman [sic] who are strong...”  
(15 yrs., European-American, high school)

Sexualized athlete: “this picture doesn’t portray the real woman. She is a tennis star, she may be beautiful, but before she is beautiful she is strong, fast, quick footed, and agile. She is supposed to be a role model, not a model. Her ditzy, seductive stare, and “sexy” pose is supposed to make her desirable, but the only thing I desire is to turn over the page.” (15 yrs., European-American, high school)

## Take-home messages

- Media need to depict female athletes as athletes, rather than as sex objects.
  - Depict women in other ways, e.g., politician, social activist, scientist



- We need to change the message to girls and women that what they can do is *more important* than how they look.



# What Can We Do as Parents/Adults?

## Tune in and Talk (start discussions early)

- “Why is there so much pressure for girls to look a certain way?”

## Question Choices

- Wearing sexy clothes requires constant vigilance

## Speak Up

- Discuss why you don’t like a certain show, pair of jeans, T-shirt
- Support companies and products that promote positive images of girls (e.g., *New Moon* magazine)

<https://www.apa.org/pi/women/programs/girls/report>

# What Can We Do as Parents/Adults?

## Understand

- Peer pressure can be intense
- Remind girls that who they are and what they can accomplish are far more important than how they look

## Educate

- Talk to girls about sexuality and what makes for a healthy relationship

## Encourage

- Athletics and other activities that emphasize talents, skills, and abilities over physical appearance

<https://www.apa.org/pi/women/programs/girls/report>

# What Can We Do as Parents/Adults?

## Be Real

- Help your kids focus on what's really important: what they think, feel, and value

## Model

- Be aware that your children are observing what you buy and watch

<https://www.apa.org/pi/women/programs/girls/report>





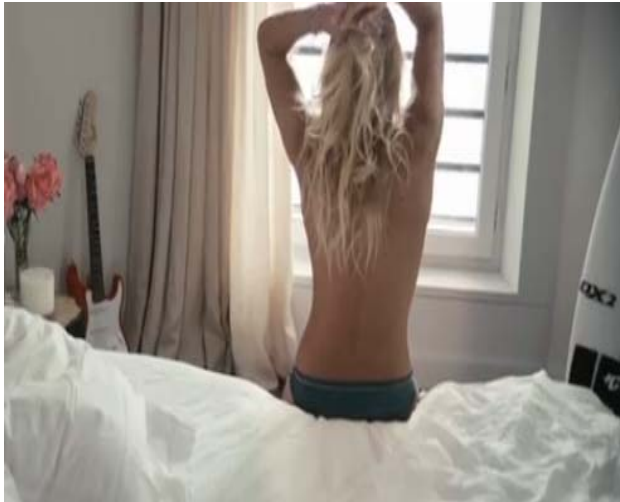
## SOCIAL ACTION BY TEENS

Julia Bluhm, a 14-year-old, started a petition to ask *Seventeen* magazine to include one photo spread per month that does not include any digitally altered photos.

At 86,438 signatures, the magazine made a commitment to not alter body size or face shape and to feature a diverse range of beauty.

# ROXY SURF AD

2013



2014



Cory Schumacher, pro surfer, launched a campaign on Change.org protesting the 2013 ad. She presented the petition with 20,000 signatures to Roxy Global headquarters. In the 2014 ad, female surfers are clothed and actually surfing...

# HEALTHY MEDIA FOR YOUTH ACT

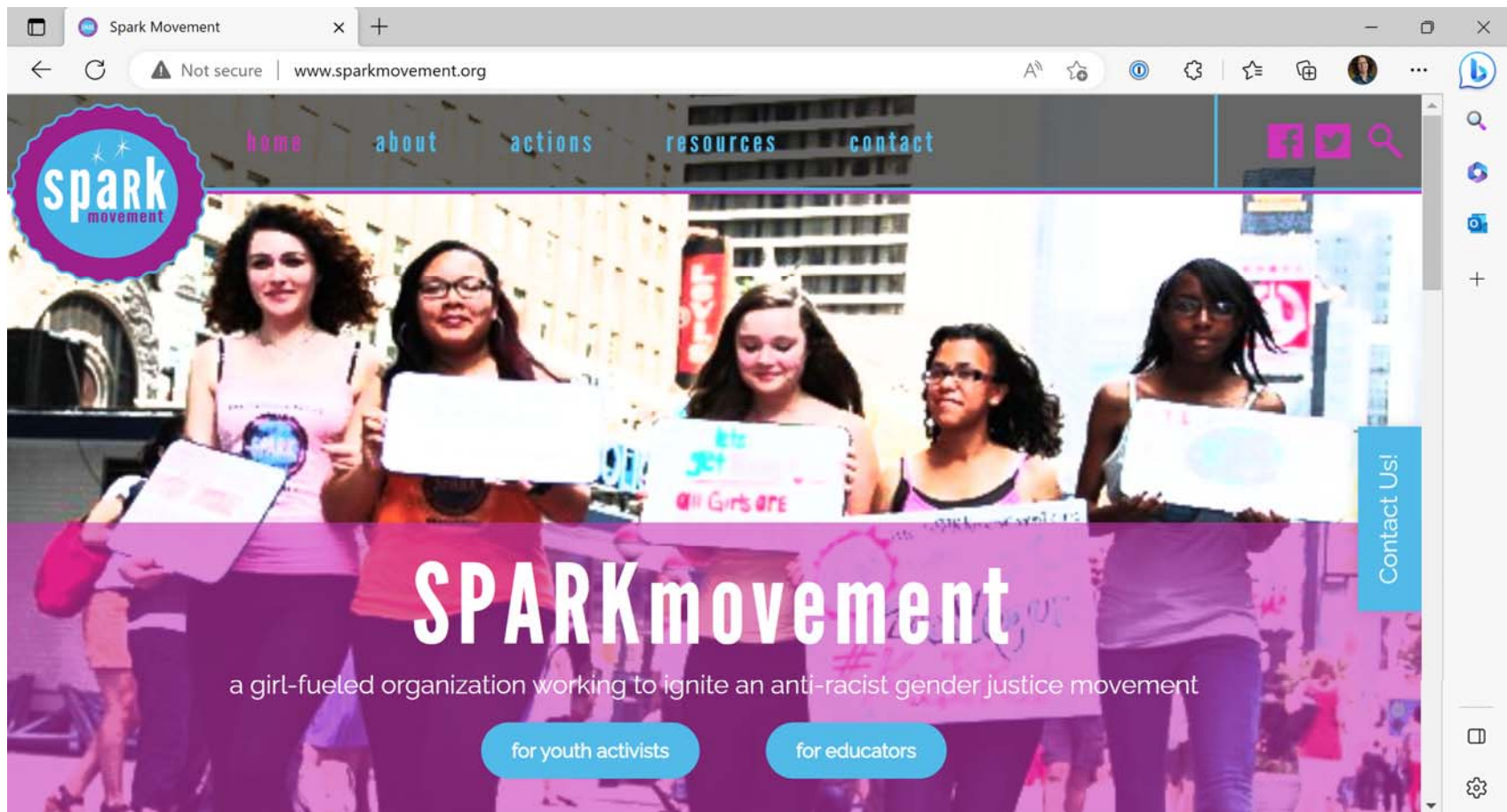
Introduced to the House of Representatives in 2010:

Provide \$250 million over five years for youth empowerment programs and research on how depictions of women and girls in media affect youth.

The measure also called for the creation of a task force composed of representatives of the media, youth-serving organizations, research entities and federal agencies.

This task force would help guide the media industry toward more helpful and positive images for the benefit of all young people as well as offer recommendations to the media for areas of improvement.





Q & A

Thanks for your attention!

For questions/comments beyond  
our time today, email me at:  
[daniels.psychology@gmail.com](mailto:daniels.psychology@gmail.com)