

Expanding the Parameters of Self-Objectification: Exploring the Role of Gender and Sexual Orientation on Self Objectification and Body Shame

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BACKGROUND

SELF-OBJECTIFICATION: The internalized process where self judgement is based on the perceived opinion of a third-party (Noll & Fredrickson, 1998)

MALE GAZE: The phenomenon that the third-party perspective is most commonly male (Calogero, 2004)

THE CURRENT STUDY

GOAL → Explore the intersectional implications of societal standards of beauty on gay (G), straight (S), bisexual (B) males and females

IV → Anticipated gaze, either unknown female or male, or no gaze

H1 → Women (any gaze condition) will report greater body shame and physique anxiety than participants who did not anticipate a gaze

H2 → G and B men will report greater body shame and physique anxiety relative to straight men when anticipating a male gaze

H3 → S and B women will report greater body shame and physique anxiety relative to G women when anticipation a male gaze

H4 → S and B men will report greater body shame and physique anxiety relative to gay men when anticipating a female gaze

H5 → G and B women will report greater body shame and physique anxiety relative to S women when anticipating a female gaze

METHODS

PARTICIPANTS → $N = 307$ participants

- $n_{females} = 225$ ($M_{age} = 25$; range = 16-65 years)
- $n_{males} = 82$ ($M_{age} = 31.5$; range = 16-78 years)
- Recruited from local universities, online forums, social networking

MEASURES

1. Demographics: BMI, age, gender, sexual orientation, education
2. Self-Objectification Questionnaire (SOQ; Fredrickson et al., 1998)
3. Body Shame Questionnaire (BSQ; Noll & Fredrickson, 1998)
4. Social Physique Anxiety Scale (SPAS; Hart, Leary, & Rejeski, 1989)

DESIGN & PROCEDURE

- Randomized, between groups (sexual orientation X gaze condition), quasi-experimental design
- Two-way MANCOVA with BMI and SOQ as covariates
- 20-minute, randomized anonymous online survey (qualtrics.com)

RESULTS

DEMOGRAPHICS

Table 1. Gender and Sexual Orientation

Gender*	Sexual Orientation	Frequency	Percentage
Male ($n = 82$)	Straight	57	69.5
	Bisexual	17	20.7
	Gay	8	0.9
Female ($n = 225$)	Straight	179	79.6
	Bisexual	37	16.4
	Gay	9	4

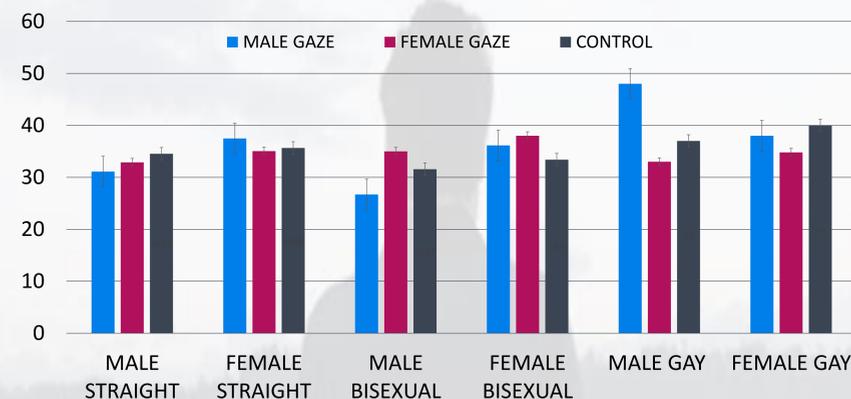
*Participants self-identified gender. A small sample of individuals identified outside the binaries. Due to low sampling, their data was not included.

Figure 1. Vignettes

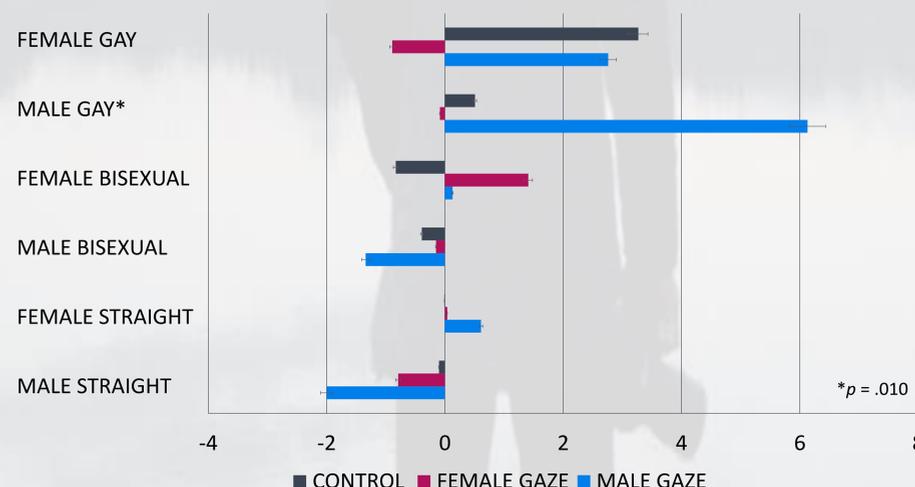
You are getting ready to meet with a new co-worker at a Starbucks on your day off. You have been paired up with [him/her] to work on an upcoming assignment.

Even though you haven't even met [him/her] yet, you are excited for this assignment and anticipate spending most of the afternoon brainstorming together.

SOCIAL PHYSIQUE ANXIETY SCORES



BODY SHAME SCORES



RESULTS

MANCOVA

NON-SIGNIFICANT INTERACTIONS:

NO effects were found for sexual orientation by gaze condition on SOQ, BSQ, and SPAS scores:

- ☒ H1
- ☒ H2
- ☒ H3
- ☒ H4
- ☒ H5

SIGNIFICANT MAIN EFFECT:

A significant effect of sexual orientation among the male participants was found:

$$\text{Pillai's Trace} = .139, F(4, 142) = 2.64, p = .036; \text{partial } \eta^2 = .069$$

Follow-up analysis of sexual orientation revealed that overall, gay males scored significantly higher than straight and bisexual males on a measure of body shame:

$$F(2, 59.63) = 4.90, p = .010; \text{partial } \eta^2 = .121$$

DISCUSSION

- Previous research has shown that gay men and straight women have similar experiences with self-objectification (Kozak et al., 2009)
- Previous research has indicated that the issue of objectification may be more complex for lesbian women (Kozee & Tylka, 2006)
 - Lesbians may belong to a particular subculture that does not hold the same "thin ideals" (Kozee & Tylka, 2006)
- Despite our hypotheses not reaching statistical significance, data is trending in the hypothesized directions – especially for women (overall) and gay males

LIMITATIONS

- Our vignettes may not have been a "strong" enough manipulation
- Manipulation did not contain a body-focused context (i.e., swimsuit)
- Small sample size for gay males and gay females → unrepresentative
- Future studies may benefit from simplifying intersectionalities:
 - Males only; examining gay males compared to straight males
 - Females only; examining gay females compared to straight females