

Objectification Theory is a framework for understanding how socio-cultural expectations of appearance impact women's internalized experiences. Just as a sizable empirical literature has linked women's experience of sexual objectification to a number of negative mental health (especially body image-related) consequences, recent research has demonstrated similar relations between the experience of objectification and body image-related concerns in men.

Gay men may be the most likely to be affected by the increasing societal objectification of men's bodies. Research has revealed significant differences between gay and heterosexual men in reported experiences of self-objectification and related body-image concerns. One possible explanation for gay men's greater experience of self-objectification and its negative psychological consequences is that, as a group, they tend to conform less to traditional masculine roles and more to traditional feminine norms than their heterosexual counterparts. Based on evidence relating women's feminine gender role conformity to self-objectification and body shame, this study explored the potential mediational role of gender role conformity in the relation between men's sexual orientation and their experience of self-objectification and body image-related concerns.

Using a multilinear model, this study hypothesized that gay/non-traditional sexual orientation would relate positively to self-objectification variables and conformity to feminine norms, and negatively to conformity to masculine norms. The model also predicted that each of the variables tested would relate to each other. In addition to direct paths, conformity to feminine norms and conformity to masculine norms were both

hypothesized to partially mediate the posited relations between sexual orientation and self-objectification, body dissatisfaction, body shame and risk for eating disorders.

188 men participated in this study, and were recruited using snowball sampling through online social media, email communications, online community groups, and message boards of interest to men. Measures included a demographics questionnaire, a measure of sexual orientation (Kinsey Scale), measures of conformity to masculine and feminine gender role norms (CMNI-45 and CFNI-45), and measures assessing objectification related variables including Body Surveillance and Body Shame (OBCS), Body Dissatisfaction (BISS), and Eating Disorder Risk (EAT-26). All participants completed an informed consent form and surveys through Qualtrics, a secure computerized data collection program.

Path analyses supported the tenants of objectification theory with the sample, as well as the previously substantiated relationship between gay/non-traditional sexual orientation and self-objectification and eating disorder risk. However, neither conformity to male norms nor conformity to female norms mediated the relationship between sexual orientation and self-objectification as hypothesized.

This study extended previous research on gay men and self-objectification by testing the mediating role of conformity to masculine and feminine gender roles in the relations of sexual orientation to objectification-related constructs. Limitations of the study included the modest sample size for a path analysis, the homogenous nature of the sample, and limitations associated with computerized surveys. Future studies examining conformity to norms as a potential mediator between sexual orientation and self-

objectification may uncover significant results if a larger and more diverse sample is used.