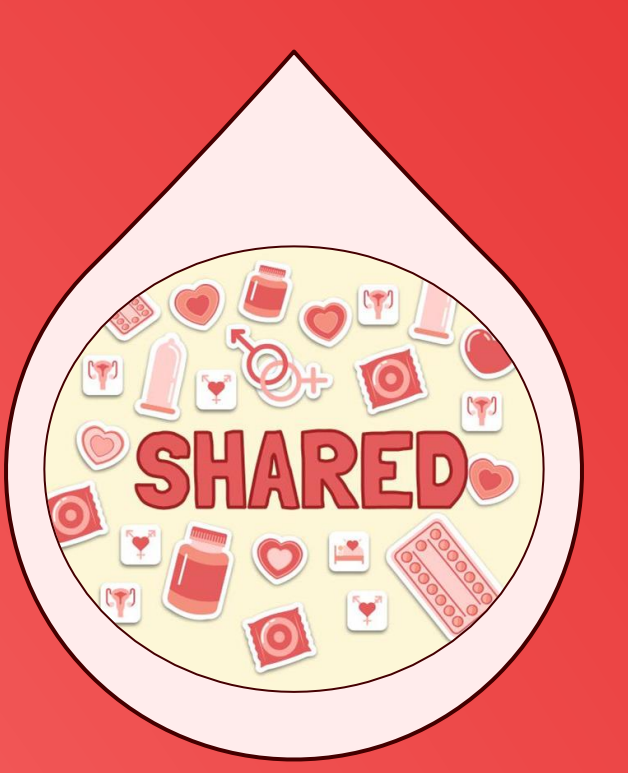




A Review of the Literature on Menstrual Attitudes and Self-Objectification

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Introduction

- Self-objectification (SO) is one's internalization of the outside viewer's perspective, often resulting in body monitoring and shame (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).
- Attitudes towards menstruation (ATM) are the perceptions and beliefs an individual holds towards menstruation and menstruators.
- Research has found that SO has implications for reproductive health, including ATM. However, the findings differ based on the characteristics of the samples and the measures used.
- We reviewed the previous literature in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of how SO and ATM relate to one another.
- In addition, we investigated the samples' characteristics in order to identify gaps that should be addressed in future research.

Method

We followed Siddaway et al.'s (2019) key stages for conducting a systematic review:

- Researchers generated a list of search terms to identify empirical studies that measured SO and ATM
 - 15 articles met the criteria; however 5 were excluded because they used duplicate samples or did not analyze the relationship between SO and ATM
- 10 articles were available for final analysis (see full list in Table 1)
- 4 researchers coded the studies and met to discuss discrepancies
- Researchers calculated percentages for the sociodemographics of the studies, identified which studies found significant relationships between SO and ATM, and summarized the strengths and weaknesses

Key Findings

- Sample size ranged from 72-319 ($M = 187.2$). Age of participants ranged from 12-61 ($M = 24.71$).
- Samples were relatively homogenous (see Table 2).
 - All participants were (presumably) cisgender women.
 - Most participants were white, in a romantic relationship, college educated, and heterosexual. 70% of studies were conducted in the US.
- 80% of studies were correlational.
- Most studies used the Self-Objectification Questionnaire (40%), the Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (30%), or a combination (30%) to measure SO.
- 70% of studies used the Menstrual Self-Evaluation Scale (MSES) to measure ATM.
- Most studies reported at least one significant bivariate relationship between higher SO and more negative ATM
 - 2 studies (2 & 3) reported significant bivariate relationships between every single measure of SO and ATM
 - 2 studies (6 & 8) found no significant relationship between SO & ATM
- Only 30% of studies conducted multivariate analyses
 - The relationship between SO and ATM remained consistent in the 2 studies (2 & 7) that controlled for age

Table 1. Studies Included in the Review

1. Chrisler, J. C., Marván, M. L., Gorman, J. A., Rossini, M. (2015) Body appreciation and attitudes toward menstruation, *Body Image*, 12, 78-81.
2. Grose, R. G., & Grabe, S. (2014). Sociocultural attitudes surrounding menstruation and alternative menstrual products: The explanatory role of self-objectification. *Health Care for Women International*, 35(6), 677-694.
3. Jackson, T. E. (2021). "I LOVE This": An exploration of how self-objectification predicts support for menstrual suppression. *Women's Reproductive Health*, 8(3), 1-18.
4. Johnston-Robledo, I., Ball, M., Laut, K., & Zekoll, A. (2003). To bleed or not to bleed: Young women's attitudes toward menstrual suppression. *Women & Health*, 38(3), 59-75.
5. Johnston-Robledo, I., Sheffield, K., Voigt, J., & Wilcox-Constantine, J. (2007). Reproductive shame: Self-objectification and young women's attitudes toward their reproductive functioning. *Women & Health*, 46(1), 25-39.
6. Milne, J. M., & Barnack-Tavlaris, J. L. (2019). A comparison of the menstrual cup and the intrauterine device: Attitudes and future intentions. *Women's Reproductive Health*, 6(4), 271-288.
7. Roberts, T. -A. (2004). Female trouble: The menstrual self-evaluation scale and women's self-objectification. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 28(1), 22-26.
8. Ryan, S., Ussher, J. M., & Perz, J. (2020). Women's experiences of the premenstrual body: Negotiating body shame, self-objectification, and menstrual shame. *Women's Reproductive Health*, 7(2), 107-126.
9. Spadaro, G., d'Elia, S.R.G. & Mosso, C.O. Menstrual knowledge and taboo TV commercials: Effects on self-objectification among Italian and Swedish women. *Sex Roles* 78, 685-696 (2017).
10. Sveinsdóttir, H. (2017). The role of menstruation in women's objectification: A questionnaire study. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 73(6), 1390-1402.

Table 2. Participant Characteristics Across Studies

Demographic Characteristics	Studies That Reported (n, %)	Mean % of Reporting Samples
Race/Ethnicity	8, 80%	
White		79.2
African American/Black		6.8
Asian American/Pacific Islander		9.8
Latino/Hispanic		8.1
Relationship Status	6, 60%	
Single		38.0
Married/Living as married		46.8
Divorced		6.9
Dating/In a relationship		38.2
Education Status	8, 80%	
Completed high school		5.7
Completed college		54.0
Some college		75.6
Sexual Orientation	4, 40%	
Heterosexual		90.2
Other		9.2

Discussion

Summary

- Higher levels of self-objectification are associated with more negative attitudes toward menstruation across most studies; however, most studies did not conduct multivariate analyses to control for other variables.
- Samples in the literature are mainly homogenous.

Strengths

- All studies used valid and reliable measures.
- Studies collectively presented a wide age range rather than exclusively college-aged participants.

Limitations

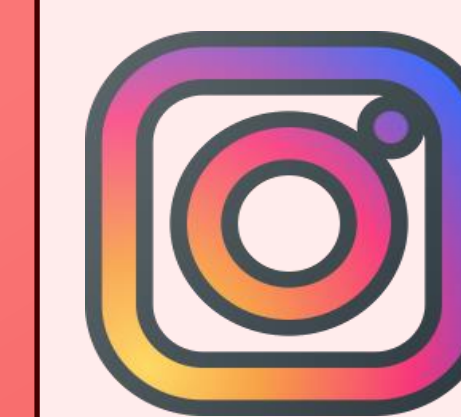
- The findings across the studies are largely based on homogenous samples, which limits our understanding from an intersectional perspective.

Future Directions

- The SO and ATM literature would benefit from more studies that include diverse samples because SO has been found to differ across social identities such as race (e.g., Fitzsimmons-Craft & Bardone-Cone, 2012) and gender identity (e.g., Strübel et al., 2020).
- Research should examine factors that moderate or mediate the relationship between SO and ATM.

Additional References

- Fitzsimmons-Craft, E. E., & Bardone-Cone, A. M. (2012). Examining prospective mediation models of body surveillance, trait anxiety, and body dissatisfaction in African American and Caucasian college women. *Sex Roles*, 67(3-4), 187-200.
- Fredrickson, B. L., & Roberts, T.-A. (1997). Objectification theory: Toward understanding women's lived experiences and mental health risks. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 21, 173-206.
- Siddaway, A. P., Wood, A. M., & Hedges, L. V. (2019). How to do a systematic review: A best practice guide for conducting and reporting narrative reviews, meta-analyses, and meta-syntheses. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 70, 747-770.
- Strübel, J., Sabik, N. J., & Tylka, T. L. (2020). Body image and depressive symptoms among transgender and cisgender adults: Examining a model integrating the tripartite influence model and objectification theory. *Body Image*, 35, 53-62.
- Watson, L. B., Ancis, J. R., White, D. N., & Nazari, N. (2013). Racial identity buffers African American women from body image problems and disordered eating. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 37(3), 337-350.
- White, L. R. (2012). The function of ethnicity, income level, and menstrual taboos in postmenarcheal adolescents' understanding of menarche and menstruation. *Sex Roles*, 68(1-2), 65-76.



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