

PHYSICAL ATTRACTIVENESS, BODY IMAGE, AND WOMEN'S SEXUAL SELF-SCHEMA

Michael W. Wiederman and Shannon R. Hurst
Ball State University

Recently, Andersen and Cyranowski (1994) presented a self-report measure of women's sexual self-schema, or cognitive view of the self regarding sexuality. In the current study, we investigated potential relationships between women's sexual self-schema and physical attractiveness, body size and shape, and body image. Young adult women ($N = 199$) completed questionnaires and were weighed, measured, and rated for facial attractiveness. Results revealed that sexual self-schema was unrelated to body size or shape, general body dissatisfaction, history of teasing about weight, and degree of investment in personal appearance. Sexual self-schema scores significantly correlated with experimenter-rated facial attractiveness, self-rated facial and bodily attractiveness, and degree of social avoidance due to concerns over personal appearance, however. In a multiple regression analysis, only self-rated facial attractiveness and social avoidance were unique predictors. Results are discussed with regard to implications for the development of women's sexual self-schema and directions for future research.

Relative to men, women's sexuality has been a neglected area of empirical inquiry (Andersen & Cyranowski, 1995). Recently, however, Andersen and Cyranowski (1994) presented a self-report measure of women's sexual self-schema, or cognitive view of the self with regard to sexuality. Through a series of six studies, these authors developed an unobtrusive sexuality measure consisting of 26 adjectives related to women's views of what a "sexual woman" is like. In several subsequent studies, women rated the extent to which each adjective was self-descriptive and

The authors express appreciation to Joel Edwards, Carri Maynard, and Carrie Fretz for assistance in data collection, and to Bernard Whitley, Jr. for helpful comments regarding an earlier version of this article.

Address correspondence and reprint requests to: Michael W. Wiederman, Department of Psychological Science, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306-0520. Email: 00mwiederma@bsu.edu.

a score was derived according to endorsement of "positive" adjectives compared to endorsement of "negative" adjectives. With a series of independent samples, Andersen and Cyranowski (1994) demonstrated that the Sexual Self-Schema Scale was reliable, not affected by social desirability and negative affective state, not perceived as a sexuality scale by respondents, and supported by convergent validity with established sexuality measures and discriminant validity with commonly used personality measures.

Andersen and Cyranowski (1994) noted that, based on their findings, "Women with a positive sexual schema, relative to those with a negative schema, view themselves as emotionally romantic or passionate and as women who are behaviorally open to romantic and sexual relationships and experiences. These women tend to be liberal in their sexual attitudes and are generally free of such social inhibitions as self-consciousness or embarrassment" (p. 1094). Accordingly, women with a relatively positive sexual self-schema were more likely to have engaged in short-term sexual relationships, experienced a greater range of sexual activities, and experienced sexual arousal in response to a greater variety of stimuli. From the initial investigation of women's sexual self-schema, it appeared that the construct was related not only to past experiences, but also to present and future romantic and sexual involvement.

The concept of sexual self-schema, and the Sexual Self-Schema Scale as a means of measurement, hold promise for furthering knowledge of women's sexuality (Andersen & Cyranowski, 1995). The purpose of the current study was investigation of potential relationships between women's sexual self-schema and physical attractiveness, body size and shape, and body image. Because sexual self-schema is related to both developmental factors and current experiences, and women's body image appears to be a cognitive self-schema construct (Altabe & Thompson, 1996), the relationship between sexual self-schema and attractiveness and body image seemed to be a logical direction of inquiry.

Others have noted the multiple ways in which women's negative views toward their own bodies may take a heavy toll on their personal lives (e.g., Wolf, 1991). Relative to women, men place greater emphasis on a potential mate's physical attractiveness (Buss, 1994; Feingold, 1990; Jackson, 1992), which often translates into emphasis on thinness (e.g., Lamb, Jackson, Cassidy, & Priest, 1993). Also, overweight women are stigmatized to a greater degree than are men (Harris, Walters, & Washull, 1991), especially with regard to dating and sexuality (Regan, 1996; Sobal, Nicolopoulos, & Lee, 1995). Thus it should not be surprising that, compared to men, women invest more in their appearance (e.g., Pliner, Chaiken, & Flett, 1990; Siever, 1994; Sullivan & Harnish, 1990), strive more for thinness (Cash & Henry, 1995; Silberstein, Striegel-Moore, Timko, & Rodin, 1988), and experience greater discrepancy between their actual and ideal body size (e.g., Tantleff-Dunn & Thompson, 1995).

Links between women's sexuality and physical attractiveness and body image make conceptual sense and are supported by everyday observation (Daniluk, 1993), so it is difficult to understand why so little research has been conducted in this area. Some writers have considered body image and sexuality among women with gynecological disease (Andersen & LeGrand, 1991; Andersen, Woods, & Copeland,

1997; Bellerose & Binik, 1993), cancer (Vaeth, 1986), eating disorders (Wiederman, 1996; Wiederman & Pryor, 1997), or serious psychopathology (Money, 1994), as well as among women who have undergone recent childbirth (Reamy & White, 1987) or mastectomy (Kris & Kraemer, 1986). Very few have considered typical young women, however, although body dissatisfaction certainly is prevalent among this group (Rodin, Silberstein, & Striegel-Moore, 1984). Those studies that have explored sexuality and attractiveness or body image among nonclinical samples of women have done so in limited ways, sometimes with contradictory findings (Feingold, 1992).

For example, some researchers have found that self-rated facial attractiveness (MacCorquodale & DeLamater, 1979; Murstein & Holden, 1979) and general body satisfaction (Faith & Schare, 1993) were positively related to amount of lifetime sexual experience. In contrast, Walsh (1993, 1995) found that overall appearance satisfaction was *negatively* related to lifetime number of sex partners for college student women. Still others have found no relationship between self-rated attractiveness and sexual experience for women (Curran & Lippold, 1975; Feingold, 1992). Although correlations between experimenter ratings and respondent ratings of physical attractiveness have been relatively small (Feingold, 1992), the few studies that included experimenter ratings of physical attractiveness generally found positive but modest correlations between women's attractiveness and sexual experience (Curran & Lippold, 1975; Stelzer, Desmond, & Price, 1987). Based on previous research, it is unclear whether apparent relationships between attractiveness and sexual experience are the result of actual deficits in physical attractiveness, whether subjective dissatisfaction with one's appearance leads to relative avoidance of sexual activity, or whether sexual experience subsequently influences women's views of their own attractiveness.

In the current study we sought to explore several aspects of attractiveness and body image as these attributes and perceptions might relate to women's sexual self-schema. Specifically, does women's facial attractiveness predict their sexual self-schema? Female facial attractiveness is an important determinant of male romantic and sexual interest in a particular female (Gangestad, 1993; Symons, 1995). Thus, relatively attractive, heterosexual women may have more positive sexual self-schemas as a result of greater male attention or attention from more attractive and desirable men.

Similarly, women's body size and shape may relate to sexual self-schema. Although there exists a small minority of men who prefer large or obese women (Goode & Preissler, 1983), American males generally find relatively thin women most sexually desirable (Harris et al., 1991; Spillman & Everington, 1989). Heavier women are stigmatized (Crandall, 1994; Harris, 1990; Miller, Rothblum, Felicio, & Brand, 1995) and may have decreased opportunities for heterosexual dating (Kallen & Doughty, 1984; Schumaker, Krejci, Small, & Sargent, 1985; Tiggemann & Rothblum, 1988). Also, there are data indicating that men find a particular waist-to-hip ratio (WHR) most attractive in potential mates (e.g., Barber, 1995). Apparently a lower WHR (e.g., .7 versus 1.0) is considered most attractive for women (Singh, 1994, 1995). Based on these findings, we sought to investigate potential relationships between sexual self-schema and body size and shape (WHR).

Although actual physical attractiveness and body size and shape may be important determinants of male attention and sexual opportunity, subjective views about one's attractiveness and body may also be related to sexual self-schema. First, women vary according to the degree of effort they invest in enhancing their physical appearance (Brown, Cash, & Mikulka, 1990). Women who place more emphasis on their appearance, or demonstrate a higher degree of appearance orientation, may achieve a greater degree of physical attractiveness, or at least subjectively believe that they do. Conceivably, having a positive view of one's physical attributes would allow for greater confidence in heterosexual interactions, which may lead to greater opportunities for sexual involvement and validation. Similarly, just as women vary in degree of appearance orientation, they also vary with regard to degree of social avoidance resulting from concern over physical attractiveness (Rosen, Srebnik, Saltzberg, & Wendt, 1991). That is, women who avoid social settings in which they believe they might be scrutinized by men correspondingly may have less opportunity for heterosexual involvement.

The subjective component of body image is important because, although body dissatisfaction and actual weight and body size are significantly related among women, the correlation is far less than perfect (Bailey, Goldberg, Swap, Chomitz & Houser, 1990; Brodie & Slade, 1988). Unfortunately, the majority of women in this culture believe they are overweight, and some degree of body dissatisfaction appears to be normative for women in the United States (Rodin et al., 1984; Silberstein, Striegel-Moore, & Rodin, 1987). It also appears that having been teased about one's body size as a child and adolescent is predictive of subsequent body dissatisfaction (Cash, 1995; Rieves & Cash, 1996; Stormer & Thompson, 1996). Accordingly, we sought to investigate whether appearance orientation, social avoidance resulting from appearance concerns, body dissatisfaction, and developmental history of teasing about body weight were related to women's sexual self-schema.

In summary, we sought to investigate potential relationships between women's sexual self-schema and physical attractiveness, body weight and shape, and subjective body image. Specifically, we hypothesized that a relatively positive sexual self-schema among young adult women would be related to (a) greater actual physical attractiveness; (b) relatively lower body weight; (c) relatively lower WHR; (d) lower body dissatisfaction and higher self-ratings of attractiveness; (e) less experience of developmental teasing about body weight; (f) greater appearance orientation, or effort invested in one's physical appearance; and (g) less avoidance of social situations because of concern over physical appearance.

It also seemed logical that appearance orientation might not exert a simple (main) effect on sexual self-schema but rather would interact significantly with self-rated attractiveness. That is, women who invest heavily in their appearance and rate their physical appearance low might hold relatively negative sexual self-schemas, whereas women who rated their physical attractiveness low but were relatively unconcerned about appearance might not. This possibility was also explored in the current study.

As many of the variables in the current study were likely to be interrelated, and all were hypothesized to demonstrate relationships with sexual self-schema, we decided to use multiple regression analyses to determine the relative predictive

power of those individual variables we found to exhibit significant simple correlations with sexual self-schema.

METHOD

Participants

Two hundred thirty-two women were recruited from introductory psychology classes at Ball State University, a midsized public university, and each woman received research credit toward partial completion of their psychology course. Two pregnant women and five women who identified themselves as exclusively or primarily erotically attracted to women were excluded from the analyses. To ensure a rather homogeneous sample with regard to age (body size and sexual and relationship experience are positively related to age), women ages 22 and older ($n = 26$) were also excluded. The final sample consisted of 199 young adult women who ranged in age from 18 to 21 years ($M = 18.91$; $SD = .90$). The large majority of participants (89.4%) were White; 8.0% were Black, and the remaining women were Latina (2.6%). Most of the participants (90.6%) reported having been involved in a "serious or exclusive" heterosexual dating relationship at some point, and 49.7% of the sample were currently involved in such a relationship.

Measures

Sexual Self-Schema

Participants completed the Sexual Self-Schema Scale (Andersen & Cyranowski, 1994) by rating the degree to which each of 26 adjectives was self-descriptive using a 7-point scale ranging from 0 = *not at all descriptive of me* to 6 = *very much descriptive of me*. Nineteen of the items comprise a "positive" factor and the remaining seven items comprise a "negative" factor. An overall score is generated by summing scores on the "positive" items and subtracting scores on the "negative" items. Andersen and Cyranowski (1994) reported an internal reliability coefficient (α) of .82, and test-retest correlations of .89 for 2 weeks and .88 for 9 weeks. As noted earlier, Andersen and Cyranowski (1994) also found that scores on the Sexual Self-Schema Scale correlated moderately with sexual experience and relevant sexual attitudes, and, in predicting heterosexual experience from respondents' sexual attitudes, scores on the Sexual Self-Schema Scale explained a significant increment in variance. In the current study, α was .72.

Actual Attractiveness

Similar to past research, as a measure of actual facial attractiveness (as opposed to self-reported facial attractiveness; Feingold, 1992), participants were unobtrusively and independently rated by a both male and female research assistant using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 = *not at all attractive* to 4 = *average attractiveness* to 7 = *very attractive*. The ratings from the male and female raters correlated .52

and a composite measure was created by taking the mean of the two ratings. The composite ratings ranged from 2 to 6.5 ($M = 4.01$; $SD = .73$).

Body Size and Shape

Participant height and weight were converted into a standard index of overall body size, or body mass index (BMI), according to Quetelet's index (kg/m^2 ; Garrow & Webster, 1985). BMI has been shown to be a convenient and accurate measure of overall adiposity (Brodie & Slade, 1988; Hannan, Wrate, Cowen, & Freeman, 1995). Body shape was measured using WHR, and the individual measurements were collected in a manner consistent with previous studies (e.g., Radke-Sharpe, Whitney-Saltiel, & Rodin, 1990).

Body Dissatisfaction and Self-Rated Attractiveness

Overall body dissatisfaction was measured with the corresponding subscale from the Eating Disorders Inventory (EDI; Garner, Olmsted, & Polivy, 1983). The EDI is the most widely used self-report measure of eating-related attitudes and traits, is reliable, and has been extensively validated (see Garner, 1991; Williamson, Anderson, Jackman, & Jackson, 1995). The Body Dissatisfaction subscale taps the respondent's current dissatisfaction with the specific body parts of greatest concern to women (e.g., hips, thighs, buttocks), with higher scores indicating greater body dissatisfaction. A sample item is, "I think that my thighs are too large." Participants responded to the nine items using a 6-point scale ranging from 1 = *always* to 6 = *never*. After reverse-scoring four items, an overall score was created by summing responses across all nine items. Garner et al. (1983) reported an internal reliability coefficient (α) of .91 among female college students, and Garner (1991) reported alphas ranging from .91 to .93 across studies, as well as test-retest correlations of .95 for 1 week and .97 for 3 weeks. In the current study, α was .90.

Self-rated bodily attractiveness was assessed by asking respondents to use a 7-point scale to indicate their response to the statement, "Overall, I would rate the attractiveness of my body as . . ." The response scale was anchored with 1 = *well below average*, 4 = *average*, and 7 = *well above average*. As in past research (Feingold, 1992), self-rated facial attractiveness was assessed similarly by presenting the same 7-point scale in response to the statement, "Overall, I would rate the attractiveness of my face as . . ."

Developmental Teasing Over Body Weight

Respondents completed the 12-item subscale measuring history of teasing over weight taken from the Physical Appearance Related Teasing Scale (Thompson, Fabian, Moulton, Dunn, & Altabe, 1991). A sample item is, "Were you ridiculed as a child about being overweight?" Participants responded to each item using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = *never* to 5 = *frequently*. The scale was scored by summing responses to the 12 items, and higher scores indicated greater experience of teasing over body weight. Thompson et al. (1991) reported an internal reliability coefficient (α) of .91 and a test-retest correlation of .86 across 2 weeks, and demonstrated validity for the scale through convergence with established measures of eating disturbance, body dissatisfaction, depression, and self-esteem (also see Thompson, Carrarin, Fowler, & Fisher, 1995). In the current study, α was .94.

Appearance Orientation

Respondents completed the Appearance Orientation subscale taken from the Body-Self Relations Questionnaire (Brown et al., 1990). Participants responded to the 12 items using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = *definitely disagree* to 5 = *definitely agree*. A sample item is, "Before going out, I usually spend a lot of time getting ready." After reverse-scoring four of the items, an overall score was computed by summing responses across the 12 items. Higher scores indicate a greater emotional and behavioral investment in one's physical appearance. Brown et al. (1990) reported an internal reliability coefficient (alpha) of .84 for females and a test-retest correlation of .90 over 4 weeks. Cash and Szymanski (1995) demonstrated that, among women, the Appearance Orientation subscale correlates in expected ways with other self-report measures of body image. In the current study alpha was .87.

Social Avoidance

Respondents completed the Social Activities subscale of the Body Image Avoidance Questionnaire (Rosen et al., 1991). A sample item is, "I do not go out socially if the people I am with are thinner than me." Participants responded to each of the four items using a 6-point scale ranging from 1 = *never* to 6 = *always*. An overall score was computed by summing across the four items, with higher scores indicating greater tendency to avoid social activities in which body weight and appearance may be a focus. Rosen et al. (1991) reported an internal reliability coefficient (alpha) of .89 and a test-retest correlation of .87 over 2 weeks. Rosen et al. (1991) also provided multiple sources of validity data including convergence with established measures of body image disturbance and disordered eating, convergence between scores on the scale and independent ratings of body image avoidance from the respondents' roommates, and notable changes in scale scores after treatment for body-image concerns. In the current study, alpha was .82.

Procedure

At the point of signing up for potential participation in the study, respondents were only aware that participation was worth 1 hour of research credit. The nature of the study was not disclosed until arrival at the testing site. None of the potential participants refused to participate on learning of the nature of the study. Participants completed the anonymous questionnaire booklet in groups ranging from 5 to 20 women and all participants did so in the presence of the same male and female research assistants (who unobtrusively rated the facial attractiveness of each participant as the questionnaire booklets were being completed). Because past research has shown that college women frequently distort their weight in self-report (Betz, Mintz, & Speakmon, 1994), we believed it important to actually weigh respondents. On completing the questionnaire, respondents deposited it in a box and walked to a separate room nearby wherein two female graduate students weighed participants and measured their height, waist, and hip circumference (according to instructions in Radke-Sharp et al., 1990). On completion of the measurements, participants were thanked and were given a credit slip and a debriefing slip in which we discussed the high prevalence of body dissatisfaction among women on college

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Simple Correlations Between Body Size/Image Variables and Sexual Self-Schema ($N = 199$)

<i>Independent Variable</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Correlation with Sexual Self-Schema</i>	
			<i>r</i>	<i>p</i> <
Body mass index (BMI)	24.76	6.04	.02	.39
Waist-to-hip ratio (WHR)	.78	.06	-.05	.23
Actual rating of attractiveness	4.01	.73	.13	.04
Self-rated facial attractiveness	4.75	1.01	.39	.001
Self-rated bodily attractiveness	3.96	1.33	.19	.004
Body dissatisfaction (EDI)	38.66	10.72	.06	.21
History of teasing over weight	19.03	10.38	-.05	.26
Appearance orientation	44.52	7.96	.09	.12
Social avoidance due to appearance concerns	6.71	3.60	-.29	.001

Note: p values are one-tailed as direction of relationship was specified in the hypotheses.

campuses and the availability of confidential counseling through the university counseling center.

RESULTS

Means and standard deviations for each of the independent variables are presented in Table 1, as are simple correlations between the independent variables and scores on the Sexual Self-Schema Scale. Not shown in the Table is the fact that 41 (20.6%) of the women exceeded a BMI of 27.3, which is used to define obesity by the National Center for Health Statistics (Najjar & Rowland, 1987). Inspection of the Table reveals that women's sexual self-schema was unrelated to body size (BMI) or shape (WHR), overall body dissatisfaction (EDI), history of teasing about weight, or degree of investment in personal appearance (i.e., appearance orientation). Women with relatively more positive sexual self-schemas believed their bodies and faces to be relatively more attractive, were judged by the experimenters to be relatively more attractive, and were least likely to avoid social settings due to appearance concerns, however. At this point, it is difficult to ascertain whether self-perceived bodily attractiveness or facial attractiveness independently contribute to sexual self-schema as both of these self-ratings were moderately correlated ($r = .44, p < .01$). Similarly, experimenter ratings of facial attractiveness were positively, but very modestly, correlated with respondent self-ratings of facial attractiveness ($r = .17, p < .05$).

To investigate the unique contribution of self-rated bodily and facial attractiveness, experimenter-rated facial attractiveness, and social avoidance in predicting women's sexual self-schema scores, these four variables were entered simultaneously into a multiple regression equation. The resulting equation was statistically

significant [$F(4, 194) = 10.58, p < .0001$] and accounted for 18% of the variance in women's sexual self-schema scores. However, only self-rated facial attractiveness ($\beta = .34, t = 4.58, p < .0001$) and social avoidance ($\beta = -.18, t = -2.38, p < .02$) were unique predictors. Self-rated bodily attractiveness ($\beta = -.06, t = -.81, p > .41$) and experimenter-rated facial attractiveness ($\beta = .06, t = .90, p > .36$) were no longer related to sexual self-schema once the effects of the other variables were controlled.

Last, to test the hypothesis that appearance orientation would exhibit a significant interaction with self-rated attractiveness in predicting sexual self-schema, an additional regression equation was constructed in which self-rated facial attractiveness and appearance orientation were entered at step one. At step two, the relevant interaction term (self-rated facial attractiveness \times appearance orientation) was added to the equation. The interaction term was unrelated to sexual self-schema scores ($\beta = .31, t = .64, p > .52$) and the additional variance accounted for when the interaction term was added was nonsignificant (Incremental $R^2 = .002, F \text{ Change} = .41, p > .52$).

DISCUSSION

The results of the current study represent both "good news" and "bad news." Past research has demonstrated that body dissatisfaction is widespread among women in this culture (Wolf, 1991), that women who are relatively thin (Harris et al., 1991) and have relatively small WHRs (Singh, 1994, 1995) are considered most sexually appealing by most men, and that a history of teasing about body weight is predictive of body dissatisfaction during adulthood (Cash, 1995; Rieves & Cash, 1996; Stormer & Thompson, 1996). None of these variables were significantly related to sexual self-schema among the young adult women in the current study, however. In that sense, these results are "good news." At least among the young women in the current sample, general body dissatisfaction and lack of congruence with culturally prescribed body ideals did not seem to negatively affect sexual self-schema. How do we explain the relative lack of relationship between women's sexual self-schema and body size, shape, and dissatisfaction?

There are several possibilities for these null findings. One is statistical in that null findings may be the result of a relative lack of statistical power (Cohen, 1977). In the current study, however, this is not a primary concern. First, the sample size of approximately 200 women is relatively large. Second, inspection of the correlation coefficients in Table 1 reveals that the effect sizes for the variables that did not exhibit statistically significant relationships with sexual self-schema scores are extremely small. Note that the largest of such correlations (involving appearance orientation) was .09, with a corresponding R^2 of .008. In other words, *less than 1%* of the variance in sexual self-schema scores was associated with appearance orientation. The remaining nonsignificant correlation coefficients represent even smaller effect sizes.

In attempting to explain the null findings involving body image, note that relatively high levels of body dissatisfaction have become somewhat normative for women in the United States (Rodin et al., 1984; Silberstein et al., 1987). The normative nature of body dissatisfaction may protect the majority of women from being as

affected as might be the case if there were not as many peers who shared their perspective (i.e., general body dissatisfaction).

With regard to the null findings having to do with actual body size and shape, relatively few (about 20%) of the women were substantially "overweight." Still, these women apparently did not differ in their sexual self-schemas from their thinner peers. As BMI and age are positively related (Andres, 1995) and the current sample was comprised of young women, it is likely that many of the women who currently were "overweight" were not so until relatively recently. In other words, we can expect that there was probably less variation in BMI among the current sample 1 year prior to the study than was the case at the time of the study. It is possible that effects of stigmatization from being overweight would be apparent with regard to sexual self-schema if assessed at some future developmental point. Also, college women may represent a relatively restricted range in the body-size spectrum, even when compared to the larger population of women their own age. That is, obesity is related to relatively lower socioeconomic status (Sobal & Stunkard, 1989) and, compared to parents of daughters who are not overweight, parents of overweight daughters are less likely to financially support college attendance (Crandall, 1995).

For the reasons just noted, it is important to investigate potential links between sexual self-schema and body size/image among women who represent a greater range of experiences and sizes. Obviously, the results of the current study (which are based on young, White college students) cannot be generalized to more mature women or those who differ with regard to ethnicity, educational level, and socioeconomic background. The current results also do not speak to possible interactions among women's body size, body image, and characteristics of their relationship partner, interactions that may be important in understanding women's sexuality (Stuart & Jacobson, 1987). That is, future research should consider the respondent's perceptions of how dating partners view her body size and shape, or their perceived desirability as a heterosexual partner.

In the current study, sexual self-schema did not vary as a function of the emotional and behavioral investment women made in their appearance (appearance orientation), nor did it vary according to an interactive relationship between self-perceived attractiveness and appearance orientation. In multivariate analyses, however, sexual self-schema was related to self-rated facial attractiveness such that women who saw themselves as relatively more attractive had more positive sexual self-schemas. Note that experimenter ratings of facial attractiveness were unrelated to sexual self-schema once other variables were statistically controlled. It was only the subjective sense of being more attractive that uniquely predicted women's sexual self-schema. As the current study was cross-sectional in nature, we cannot determine the direction of effect. Perhaps women who are more open to sexual relationships and experiences (i.e., have a positive schema) are more likely to receive complimentary feedback from men regarding their facial attractiveness (Andersen & Cyranowski, 1994). Conversely, it may be that viewing oneself as physically attractive leads to greater confidence in heterosexual interactions and, hence, greater experience and comfort regarding sexual matters.

Consistent with the view that increased social confidence results in a more positive sexual self-schema, social avoidance resulting from appearance concerns

was the only other unique predictor of sexual self-schema. That is, women who indicated the greatest degree of social avoidance also indicated the most negative sexual self-schemas. Rather than body dissatisfaction, which may be normative for young adult women in this culture, dissatisfaction with facial attractiveness and avoidance of social situations due to being concerned over one's appearance seemed to have an inhibitory effect on women's views of themselves as sexual persons.

Qualitative studies suggest that body size and body image play important roles in the sexuality of women in general (Daniluk, 1993) and that body size and body image may interact with certain characteristics of women's intimate relationship partners, such as a critical stance toward the overweight partner (Stuart & Jacobson, 1987). Because of the rather restricted nature of the current sample (young, White college students), further research is needed regarding the correlates of women's sexual self-schema within more varied samples. For example, are there relationships between body image and sexual self-schema among lesbian women given that this subculture may place relatively less emphasis on physical attractiveness (Heffernan, 1994; Siever, 1994)? Does body image affect women's sexual self-schema as a function of women's adherence to traditional gender roles (Martz, Handley, & Eisler, 1995)? Is sexual self-schema related to drive for thinness and disordered eating (Wiederman, 1996)? Does activation of women's negative self-schema regarding body image and attractiveness result in decreased sexual self-schema scores (Altabe & Thompson, 1996)? What about potential relationships between sexual self-schema and a history of physical or sexual trauma and abuse (Andrews, 1995)? Possible relationships between such variables and women's sexual self-schema await further investigation.

Initial submission: August 16, 1996

Initial acceptance: October 28, 1996

Final acceptance: April 18, 1997

REFERENCES

- Altabe, M., & Thompson, J. K. (1996). Body image: A cognitive self-schema construct? *Cognitive Therapy and Research, 20*, 171-193.
- Andersen, B. L., & Cyranowski, J. M. (1994). Women's sexual self-schema. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 67*, 1079-1100.
- Andersen, B. L., & Cyranowski, J. M. (1995). Women's sexuality: Behaviors, responses, and individual differences. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 63*, 891-906.
- Andersen, B. L., & LeGrand, J. (1991). Body image for women: Conceptualization, assessment, and a test of its importance to sexual dysfunction and medical illness. *Journal of Sex Research, 28*, 457-477.
- Andersen, B. L., Woods, X. A., & Copeland, L. J. (1997). Sexual self-schema and sexual morbidity among gynecologic cancer survivors. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 65*, 221-229.
- Andres, R. (1995). Body weight and age. In K. D. Brownell & C. G. Fairburn (Eds.), *Eating disorders and obesity: A comprehensive handbook* (pp. 65-72). New York: Guilford.
- Andrews, B. (1995). Bodily shame as a mediator between abusive experiences and depression. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 104*, 277-285.

- Bailey, S. M., Goldberg, J. P., Swap, W. C., Chomitz, V. R., & Houser, R. F. (1990). Relationships between body dissatisfaction and physical measurements. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 9, 457-461.
- Barber, N. (1995). The evolutionary psychology of physical attractiveness: Sexual selection and human morphology. *Ethology and Sociobiology*, 16, 395-424.
- Bellerose, S. B., & Binik, Y. M. (1993). Body image and sexuality in oophorectomized women. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 22, 435-459.
- Betz, N. E., Mintz, L., & Speakmon, G. (1994). Gender differences in the accuracy of self-reported weight. *Sex Roles*, 30, 543-552.
- Brodie, D. A., & Slade, P. D. (1988). The relationship between body image and body fat in adult women. *Psychological Medicine*, 18, 623-631.
- Brown, T. A., Cash, T. F., & Mikulka, P. J. (1990). Attitudinal body-image assessment: Factor analysis of the Body-Self Relations Questionnaire. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 55, 135-144.
- Buss, D. M. (1994). *The evolution of desire: Strategies of human mating*. New York: Basic Books.
- Cash, T. F. (1995). Developmental teasing about physical appearance: Retrospective descriptions and relationships with body image. *Social Behavior and Personality*, 23, 123-130.
- Cash, T. F., & Henry, P. E. (1995). Women's body images: The results of a national survey in the U.S.A. *Sex Roles*, 33, 19-28.
- Cash, T. F., & Szymanski, M. L. (1995). The development and validation of the Body-Image Ideals Questionnaire. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 64, 466-477.
- Cohen, J. (1977). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences* (rev. ed.). New York: Academic Press.
- Crandall, C. S. (1994). Prejudice against fat people: Ideology and self-interest. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 66, 882-894.
- Crandall, C. S. (1995). Do parents discriminate against their heavyweight daughters? *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 21, 724-735.
- Curran, J. P., & Lippold, S. (1975). The effect of physical attraction and attitude similarity on attraction in dating dyads. *Journal of Personality*, 43, 528-539.
- Daniluk, J. C. (1993). The meaning and experience of female sexuality: A phenomenological analysis. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 17, 53-69.
- Faith, M. S., & Schare, M. L. (1993). The role of body image in sexually avoidant behavior. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 22, 345-356.
- Feingold, A. (1990). Gender differences in effects of physical attractiveness on romantic attraction: A comparison across five research paradigms. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 59, 981-993.
- Feingold, A. (1992). Good-looking people are not what we think. *Psychological Bulletin*, 111, 304-341.
- Gangestad, S. W. (1993). Sexual selection and physical attractiveness: Implications for mating dynamics. *Human Nature*, 4, 205-235.
- Garner, D. M. (1991). *Eating Disorders Inventory-2: Professional manual*. Odessa, FL: Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc.
- Garner, D. M., Olmsted, M. P., & Polivy, J. (1983). Development and validation of a multidimensional eating disorder inventory for anorexia nervosa and bulimia. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 2(2), 15-34.
- Garrow, J. S., & Webster, J. (1985). Quetelet's index (W/H^2) as a measure of fatness. *International Journal of Obesity*, 9, 147-153.
- Goode, E., & Preissler, J. (1983). The fat admirer. *Deviant Behavior*, 4, 175-202.
- Hannan, W. J., Wrate, R. M., Cowen, S. J., & Freeman, C. P. L. (1995). Body mass index as an estimate of body fat. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 18, 91-97.
- Harris, M. B. (1990). Is love seen as different for the obese? *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 20, 1209-1224.
- Harris, M. B., Walters, L. C., & Waschull, S. (1991). Gender and ethnic differences in obesity-

- related behaviors and attitudes in a college sample. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 21, 1545-1566.
- Heffernan, K. (1994). Sexual orientation as a factor in risk for binge eating and bulimia nervosa: A review. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 16, 335-347.
- Jackson, L. A. (1992). *Physical appearance and gender: Sociobiological and sociocultural perspectives*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Kallen, D. J., & Doughty, A. (1984). The relationship of weight, the self-perception of weight and self-esteem with courtship behavior. *Marriage and Family Review*, 7, 93-114.
- Kriss, R. T., & Kraemer, H. C. (1986). Efficacy of group therapy for problems with postmastectomy self-perception, body image, and sexuality. *Journal of Sex Research*, 22, 438-451.
- Lamb, C. S., Jackson, L. A., Cassiday, P. B., & Priest, D. J. (1993). Body figure preferences of men and women: A comparison of two generations. *Sex Roles*, 28, 345-358.
- MacCorquodale, P., & DeLamater, J. (1979). Self-image and premarital sexuality. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 41, 327-339.
- Martz, D. M., Handley, K. B., & Eisler, R. M. (1995). The relationship between feminine gender role stress, body image, and eating disorders. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 19, 493-508.
- Miller, C. T., Rothblum, E. D., Felicio, D., & Brand, P. (1995). Compensating for stigma: Obese and nonobese women's reactions to being visible. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 21, 1093-1106.
- Money, J. (1994). Body-image syndromes in sexology: Phenomenology and classification. *Journal of Psychology and Human Sexuality*, 6(3), 31-48.
- Murstein, B. I., & Holden, C. C. (1979). Sexual behavior and correlates among college students. *Adolescence*, 14, 625-639.
- Najjar, M. F., & Rowland, M. (1987). *Anthropometric reference data and prevalence of overweight: United States, 1976-1980*. (Vital & Health Statistics, series 11, no. 238, PHS Publication No. 87-1688). Hyattsville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- Pliner, P., Chaiken, S., & Flett, G. L. (1990). Gender differences in concern with body weight and physical appearance over the life span. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 16, 263-273.
- Radke-Sharp, N., Whitney-Saltiel, D., & Rodin, J. (1990). Fat distribution as a risk factor for weight and eating concerns. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 9, 27-36.
- Reamy, K. J., & White, S. E. (1987). Sexuality in the puerperium: A review. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 16, 165-186.
- Regan, P. C. (1996). Sexual outcasts: The perceived impact of body weight and gender on sexuality. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 26, 1803-1815.
- Rieves, L., & Cash, T. F. (1996). Social developmental factors and women's body-image attitudes. *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality*, 11, 63-78.
- Rodin, J., Silberstein, L., & Striegel-Moore, R. (1984). Women and weight: A normative discontent. *Nebraska Symposium on Motivation*, 32, 267-307.
- Rosen, J. C., Srebnik, D., Saltzberg, E., & Wendt, S. (1991). Development of a Body Image Avoidance Questionnaire. *Psychological Assessment*, 3, 32-37.
- Schumaker, J. F., Krejci, R. C., Small, L., & Sargent, R. G. (1985). Experience of loneliness by obese individuals. *Psychological Reports*, 57, 1147-1154.
- Siever, M. D. (1994). Sexual orientation and gender as factors in socioculturally acquired vulnerability to body dissatisfaction and eating disorders. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 62, 252-260.
- Silberstein, L. R., Striegel-Moore, R. H., & Rodin, J. (1987). Feeling fat: A woman's shame. In H. B. Lewis (Ed.), *The role of shame in symptom formation* (pp. 89-108). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Silberstein, L. R., Striegel-Moore, R. H., Timko, C., & Rodin, J. (1988). Behavioral and psychological implications of body dissatisfaction: Do men and women differ? *Sex Roles*, 19, 219-232.
- Singh, D. (1994). Is thin really beautiful and good? Relationship between waist-to-hip ratio (WHR) and female attractiveness. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 16, 123-132.

- Singh, D. (1995). Female health, attractiveness, and desirability for relationships: Role of breast asymmetry and waist-to-hip ratio. *Ethology and Sociobiology*, 16, 465-481.
- Sobal, J., Nicolopoulos, V., & Lee, J. (1995). Attitudes about overweight and dating among secondary school students. *International Journal of Obesity*, 19, 376-381.
- Sobal, J., & Stunkard, A. J. (1989). Socioeconomic status and obesity: A review of the literature. *Psychological Bulletin*, 105, 260-275.
- Spillman, D. M., & Everington, C. (1989). Somatotypes revisited: Have the media changed our perception of the female body image? *Psychological Reports*, 64, 887-890.
- Stelzer, C., Desmond, S. M., & Price, J. H. (1987). Physical attractiveness and sexual activity of college students. *Psychological Reports*, 60, 567-573.
- Stormer, S. M., & Thompson, J. K. (1996). Explanations of body image disturbance: A test of maturational status, negative verbal commentary, social comparison, and sociocultural hypotheses. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 19, 193-202.
- Stuart, R. B., & Jacobson, B. (1987). *Weight, sex, and marriage: A delicate balance*. New York: Norton.
- Sullivan, L. A., & Harnish, R. J. (1990). Body image: Differences between high and low self-monitoring males and females. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 24, 291-302.
- Symons, D. (1995). Beauty is in the adaptations of the beholder: The evolutionary psychology of human female sexual attractiveness. In P. R. Abramson & S. D. Pinkerton (Eds), *Sexual nature, sexual culture* (pp. 80-118). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Tantleff-Dunn, S., & Thompson, J. K. (1995). Romantic partners and body image disturbance: Further evidence for the role of perceived-ideal disparities. *Sex Roles*, 33, 589-605.
- Thompson, J. K., Cattarin, J., Fowler, B., & Fisher, E. (1995). The Perception of Teasing Scale (POTS): A revision and extension of the Physical Appearance Related Teasing Scale (PARTS). *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 65, 146-157.
- Thompson, J. K., Fabian, L. J., Moulton, D. O., Dunn, M. E., & Altabe, M. N. (1991). Development and validation of the Physical Appearance Related Teasing Scale. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 56, 513-521.
- Tiggemann, M., & Rothblum, E. D. (1988). Gender differences in social consequences of perceived overweight in the United States and Australia. *Sex Roles*, 18, 75-86.
- Vaeth, J. M. (Ed.). (1986). *Body image, self-esteem, and sexuality in cancer patients*. Basel, Switzerland: Karger.
- Walsh, A. (1993). Love styles, masculinity/femininity, physical attractiveness, and sexual behavior: A test of evolutionary theory. *Ethology and Sociobiology*, 14, 25-38.
- Walsh, A. (1995). Parental attachment, drug use, and facultative sexual strategies. *Social Biology*, 42, 95-107.
- Wiederman, M. W. (1996). Women, sex, and food: A review of research on eating disorders and sexuality. *Journal of Sex Research*, 33, 301-311.
- Wiederman, M. W., & Pryor, T. (1997). Body dissatisfaction and sexuality among women with bulimia nervosa. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 21, 361-365.
- Williamson, D. A., Anderson, D. A., Jackman, L. P., & Jackson, S. R. (1995). Assessment of eating disordered thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. In D. B. Allison (Ed.), *Handbook of assessment methods for eating behaviors and weight-related problems: Measures, theory, and research* (pp. 347-386). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Wolf, N. (1991). *The beauty myth: How images of beauty are used against women*. New York: William Morrow.

