

Fetishization of Sexual Minority Women by Men and Media

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Abstract:

This systematized review looks at existing literature on the fetishization, objectification and sexualization of self identifying women in sexual minority groups. The aim of this review paper is to analyse the role of men and media in the representation of these women, and to understand the causes and effects of this fetishization on them and their communities. 31 papers were selected out of the originally shortlisted 67 papers on the basis of the inclusion criteria. The comprehensive synthesis of the literature underlines several key themes. Across all groups, the media portrayals highlight the hypersexualized stereotypes of these women, for their targeted heterosexual male audience, oftentimes obscuring and erasing their authentic identities. When it comes to Lesbian and Bisexual women, their sexuality is often perceived as “performative” for the male viewers (Fahs, 2014). In contrast, transgender women often face objectification that dehumanizes them, reducing them to a mere “sex toy” (Anzani et al., 2020). For Asexual women, their identities are undermined through dismissal, pathologization and epistemic injustice (Cuthbert, 2022). This fetishization and objectification by men and media is a persistent, widespread problem that not only invalidates the identities of countless individuals, but also reinforces harmful stereotypes adding to mental health risks.

Keywords:

Fetishization, sexual objectification, lesbian, bisexual, asexual, transgender women, media representation, male gaze.