

# Sun, Salon, and Cosmetic Tanning: Predictors and Motives

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**Abstract**—The appearance management behavior of tanning by gay men is examined through the lens of Impression Formation. The study proposes that body image, self-esteem, and internalized homophobia are connected and affect the motives for engaging in sun, salon, and cosmetic tanning. Motives examined were: to look masculine, to look attractive to (potential) partners, to look attractive in general, to socialize, to meet a peer standard, and for personal satisfaction. Using regression analysis to examine data of 103 gay men who engage in at least one method of tanning, results reveal that components of body image and internalized homophobia—but not self-esteem—are linked to various motives and methods of tanning. These findings support and extend the literature of Impression Formation Theory and provide practitioners in the health and health-related fields new avenues to pursue when dealing with diseases related to tanning.

**Keywords**—Body image, gay men, tanning.

## I. INTRODUCTION

IN 2007, over one million cases of nonmelanoma skin cancer and an estimated 60,000 cases of melanoma skin cancer were diagnosed in men and women, but there is a higher incidence of types of skin cancers in men than women [1]. These statistics are due in part to the fact that men are less concerned with the effects of sun tanning than women [2] and do not protect their skin as much as women [3], [4].

People can achieve a tan through three different methods: via the sun, via a salon, and via cosmetics. However, research has noted that people often use more than one tanning method, e.g., both sun tanning and salon tanning [5]. Sun and salon tanning are dangerous because of their association with skin cancers; however cosmetic tanning (e.g., using liquids, gels and powders to change the color of one's skin) are considered safer.

Despite knowing the health risks associated with tanning, people still engage in the behavior if they feel it will improve their physical beauty [6]. In fact, [7] identified tanning as one of the five most frequent means used by young people to improve attractiveness, after clothing, exercise, dieting and personality. Tanned skin has become one hallmark of

attractiveness, and for gay men may even be considered a cultural appearance standard. To wit, when referencing actor Steve Reeves, [8] noted, "his chest made him a matinee idol, his tan a gay icon...." *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* hosts Carson Kressley and Ted Allen have noted that that stereotype or expectation of gay men is that they "tan a lot" [9]. And [10] noted some gay men tan at salons in preparation for circuit parties (large, themed parties that attract thousands of gay men from around the globe).

There are many reasons for tanning (e.g., to improve attractiveness, to appear healthy, to prevent burning during a beach vacation, etc.), but little work has been conducted on gay men's motives to tan. Gay men are known to be appearance oriented [11] and have a psychological makeup that is comprised of internalized homophobia [12] and lower self-esteem than straight men [13], [14]. Given that risky appearance management behaviors are linked to people with low self-esteem [15] and to those who feel dissatisfied with their bodies [16] the connection among these variables is likely to offer insight into tanning behaviors and theory within the gay community.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### A. Independent Variables: Body Image, Self-esteem, and Internalized Homophobia

Body image is the mental picture one has of one's body [17]. Components of body image include appearance orientation, appearance evaluation, and appearance satisfaction [18]. Appearance orientation is the investment one has in appearance; appearance evaluation is the general satisfaction with one's appearance; and appearance satisfaction is satisfaction with specific body parts. Researchers have noted that gay men have an avid interest in their body image and self-presentation [16], [19], sometimes leading to behaviors that can harm the body including anorexia, bulimia, chronic dieting, and steroid use. Researchers have also noted that people who sunbathe are concerned with their appearance [6], [20], and continue to tan despite knowing the potential health risks [6]. Thus, like disordered eating and steroid use, tanning is a risky means to an appearance-related end.

Body image is linked to self-esteem. Those with body dissatisfaction tend to have lower self-esteem than people who view their bodies more positively [16], [21], [22]. Low self-esteem has been noted as a predictor of women's use of appearance management behaviors that carry some risk [15] and it is likely that the same could be true of men. Given that

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gay men have lower self-esteem than straight men due to social stigma [13], they may tan themselves if they have low self-esteem.

Body image and self-esteem are related to internalized homophobia. Internalized homophobia is the belief or acceptance of current social attitudes which are usually negative towards gay people by a gay person [12]. Reference [12] identified three components of internalized homophobia: attitudes towards one's own sexual orientation, towards other's sexual orientation, and towards revealing one's sexual orientation to others. Thus, a person with a high degree of internalized homophobia is likely to view himself and the gay population through the lens of inferiority and subscribe to stereotypes about the gay population. Research has noted that attitudes towards one's own sexual orientation are linked to poor appearance evaluation, poor appearance satisfaction, and poor self-esteem [23]. Thus, gay men with high internalized homophobia would be less likely to tan if they view it as typical behavior of gay men.

#### *B. Dependent Variables: Motives for Tanning*

Researchers have noted various motives for men engaging in tanning. Reference [24] argued that adolescent boys may tan if it reinforces their sense of masculinity via risk-taking behavior. And [25] noted a connection between tanning and bodybuilders where salon tanning is instrumental in highlighting muscles. This implies that a tan is considered to be indicative of one's manliness. However, one cannot discount that a tan has long been considered an attractive aesthetic.

The phrase "tall, dark and handsome" has been an axiom used to describe the ideal man for generations. This cliché does have some merit, though. References [26] and [27] noted sunbathing is a means used to maintain attractiveness, likely due to the perceptions that tanned people are more popular than untanned people [28]. Additionally, the view that a sun tan is attractive is highlighted in the finding that people who do not suntan would like to have a tan [28].

Meanwhile, [29] noted that tanning is used as a social activity in which people can spend time with friends. This is likely due a combination of influence of one's peer group on tanning behaviors [30] and the number of friends who tan [26], implying that not only is tanning engaged in for social reasons but also to meet a peer standard.

#### *C. Theory Base*

These behaviors can be read in light of Impression Management Theory. Goffman theorized that people strive to create and maintain impressions they believe represent their identities and argued that people play a role in society and use clothing to foster positive impressions [31]. However, impression management includes more than clothing; it includes the body as well. Reference [32] has argued that the body is an integral part of appearance and they note, "the body holds significant meaning to us as individuals and as group members" (p. 129). Reference [15] also confirms that appearance management is used to alter the body to create

desired impressions. Thus, using this perspective as a guide, we proposed the following research question:

*How do self-esteem, internalized homophobia, and body image relate to sun, salon, and cosmetic tanning motives?*

### III. METHOD

#### *A. Participants*

Participants were gay men at least 18 years of age. They were recruited via word-of-mouth, flyers, postings on electronic bulletin boards and in gay-related chat rooms indicating the nature of the study. The instrument was located online so participants could have found it by happenstance by conducting an Internet search. Participants were informed of their rights as participants and were asked to verify they were at least 18 years of age using a check-off system before proceeding to the instrument. When the instrument was complete, participants submitted their responses and had the opportunity to register for a monetary drawing. Participants' responses were not linked to information submitted for the drawing. This method was approved the Internal Review Board where the researchers were employed.

#### *B. Instruments*

Body image is a broad term used to mean one's perception of the body. While many instruments have been developed to assess different aspects of body image, the Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire (MBSRQ) [33] is one that captures various aspects through a number of subscales. In this study, the subscales of Appearance Orientation, Appearance Evaluation, and Body Areas Satisfaction were used. Appearance Orientation, or one's investment in appearance, was captured with 12 items where responses were ranked from strongly disagree to strongly agree on a 5-point Likert-type scale. Higher scores are interpreted as the respondent having more interest in his or her appearance. Individual scores can range from 12 to 60, and researchers have reported internal consistency above the standard cut off of .70. An example item is: "I am self-conscious if my grooming isn't right." Appearance Evaluation, or general approval with one's appearance, was captured with 7 items using the same ranking system for Appearance Orientation. Higher scores are interpreted as the respondent has more approval of his or her appearance. Individual scores can range from 7 to 35, and like the Appearance Orientation subscale, researchers have reported acceptable alphas on tests of internal consistency and test-retest reliability. An example item is: "My body is sexually appealing." The final measure of body image was the Body Areas Satisfaction subscale of the MBSRQ where respondents rank their approval with body parts: face, hair, lower torso, mid torso, upper torso, muscle tone, weight, height, and overall appearance. These nine items are ranked from very dissatisfied to very satisfied on a 5-point Likert-type scale. Scores range from 1 to 5, and researchers have also reported acceptable alphas on tests of reliability [34].

Self-esteem is a general term used to describe one's feelings of self-worth and Rosenberg was instrumental in

fleshing-out the concept and developing an instrument to evaluate it. The Rosenberg Self-esteem Index (RSEI) [35] contains 10 items where respondents rank from strongly disagree to strongly agree on a 5-point Likert-type scale. The original version of the RSEI utilized a 4-point scale but was modified it for this study so participants would have the option of a "neutral" response. Higher scores are representative of a more positive sense of self. Scores can range from 10-50, and researchers have reported acceptable reliabilities above the standard cut-off of .70 [35], [36]. An example item is: "I take a positive attitude towards myself."

Internalized homophobia is a general term used to describe the acceptance of negative social attitudes about gay people by gay people. All three subscales of the Nungesser Homosexual Attitudes Inventory (NHA1) were used in this study: attitudes toward one's own homosexuality, attitudes towards others' homosexuality, and attitudes towards revealing one's homosexuality to others [12]. Attitudes towards one's own homosexuality was captured with 10 items where responses were ranked from strongly disagree to strongly agree on a 5-point Likert-type scale. An example item is: "I am glad to be gay." Attitudes towards others' homosexuality were captured with 12 items using the same ranking method. An item example is: "Marriage between gays should be legalized." Attitudes towards revealing one's homosexuality to others was captured with 12 items using the same ranking method. An item example is: "When I tell my friends [that I'm gay] I do not worry that they will try to remember things about me that would make me appear to fit the stereotype of a gay man." The total score from 3 to 15 is created by summing the individual average of each subscale. Higher scores indicate lower internalized homophobia and [12] reports reliabilities on all three subscales above the standard cut-off of .70.

The researchers of this study developed a 5-point Likert-type scale to capture motives for tanning. Participants were asked to rank their motives for sun, salon, and/or cosmetic tanning. Higher scores indicated more importance placed on the motive. Motives included: to look masculine, to look attractive to (potential) partners, to look attractive in general, for social reasons (i.e., to socialize), to meet a peer standard, and for personal satisfaction. An expert panel of body image researchers from various disciplines evaluated the instrument for face validity.

### C. Data Collection and Analysis

Using an Internet survey methodology, data were collected for three weeks. Researchers such as [37]-[39] have reported this method as a viable way to collect data comparable with mailed or telephone surveys. SPSS was used to analyze data, using frequencies, means, and regression analyses.

## IV. RESULTS

### A. Demographics

In total, 215 questionnaires were completed; 52 respondents reported participating in sun tanning; 34 in salon tanning; and 26 in cosmetic tanning. These responses were isolated for analysis. All were white, gay men from North America. The

sample's mean age was 33. The majority had an income over \$40,000 and had "some" college.

All items on all scales were above alpha .70 with the exception of one question out of 34 questions from the NHA1. This item was removed from further analysis. All scales had acceptable reliabilities: Appearance orientation (alpha=.89), Appearance Evaluation (alpha=.90), Body Areas Satisfaction (alpha=.81), RSEI (alpha=.89), and NHA1 (.92).

The range of possible responses on the self-esteem scale was 10-50 with higher scores indicating higher self-esteem. The self-esteem mean for men who sun tan was 39.86; for men who salon tan was 40.45; for men who cosmetic tan was 42.04. Thus, men in this sample had a relatively healthy self-esteem.

The range of possible responses on the NHA1 was 3-15, with higher scores representing lower internalized homophobia. The total internalized homophobia mean for men who sun tan was 12.35; for men who salon tan was 12.27; and for men who cosmetic tan was 12.52. Thus, men in this sample had relatively low internalized homophobia.

The range of possible responses on the Appearance Orientation subscale of the MBSRQ was 12-60, with higher scores indicating a higher degree of orientation. The appearance orientation mean for men who sun tan was 43.62 for men who salon tan was 45.94; and for men who cosmetic tan was 47.58. Thus, men in this sample were somewhat above the middle point of the scale on appearance orientation, or investment in appearance.

The range of possible responses on the appearance evaluation subscale of the MBSRQ was 7-35, with higher scores indicating a higher degree of evaluation. The appearance evaluation mean for men who sun tan was 24.23; for men who salon tan was 24.76; and for men who cosmetic tan was 24.92. Thus, men in this sample were somewhat above the middle point of the scale on appearance evaluation, or rather neutral in their feelings..

The range of possible responses on the Body Areas Satisfaction subscale of the MBSRQ was 9-45, with higher scores indicating a higher degree of satisfaction with one's body. The appearance satisfaction for men who sun tan was 30.02 and; for men who salon tan was 31.50; and for men who cosmetic tan was 30.40. Thus men in this sample were somewhat above the middle point of the scale, meaning they were relatively neutral in their satisfaction with specific body areas (face, hair, etc.).

See Table I for means and standard deviations of all scales.

The range of possible responses on motives for sun/salon/cosmetic tanning was 1-5, with higher scores indicating a stronger motive. Motives with the highest responses for sun tanning were to look attractive in general (mean=4.06) and for personal satisfaction (mean=3.86); motives with lowest responses were to socialize (mean=2.56), to look masculine (mean=2.23) and to meet a peer standard (mean=2.14). Highest responses for salon tanning were motives to look attractive in general (mean=4.03), for personal satisfaction (mean=3.82) and to look attractive to (potential) partners (mean=3.59); lowest responses were to meet a peer standard (mean=2.12), to look masculine (mean=2.09) and socialize (mean=1.67). Highest responses for cosmetic

tanning were to look attractive in general (mean=4.24), for personal satisfaction (mean=3.79), to look attractive to (potential) partners (mean=3.64); lowest responses were to meet a peer standard (mean=1.884) and to look masculine (mean=2.04). See Table II for means and standard deviations of motives to sun, salon, and cosmetic tan.

### B. Analysis

#### 1. Tanning to look masculine

A regression analysis demonstrated that no independent variables were related to sun tanning for masculinity.

A regression analysis demonstrated internalized homophobia due to other's sexual orientation was significantly related to salon tanning to look masculine,  $F(1, 30) = 7.092$ ,  $p = .013$ , and accounted for roughly 20% of the variance explained,  $R^2 = .196$ . The nature of the relationship was negative,  $\beta = -.443$ . However, because higher scores on the NHAH indicate lower internalized homophobia, this means that, as internalized homophobia due to other's sexual orientation increases, a person is more likely to salon tan to look masculine.

A regression analysis demonstrated that no independent variables were significantly related to cosmetic tanning to look masculine.

#### 2. Tanning to look attractive to (potential) partners

A regression analysis demonstrated that appearance orientation was significantly related to sun tanning to look attractive to (potential) partners,  $F(1, 50) = 15.723$ ,  $p < .001$ , and accounted for roughly 24% of the variance explained,  $R^2 = .243$ . The nature of the relationship was positive,  $\beta = .493$ . Therefore, as appearance orientation increases a person is more likely to sun tan to look attractive to (potential) partners. No other independent variables were significant.

A regression analysis demonstrated that appearance orientation was significantly related to salon tanning to look attractive to (potential) partners,  $F(1, 30) = 10.038$ ,  $p = .004$ , and accounted for roughly 26% of the variance explained,  $R^2 = .257$ . The nature of the relationship was positive,  $\beta = .507$ . Therefore, as appearance orientation increases a person is more likely to salon tan to look attractive to (potential) partners.

#### 3. Tanning to look attractive in general

A regression analysis demonstrated that appearance orientation and internalized homophobia regarding revealing one's sexual orientation to others were significantly related to sun tanning to look attractive in general,  $F(2, 50) = 12.034$ ,  $p$

$< .001$ , and accounted for roughly 33% of the variance explained,  $R^2 = .334$ . The nature of the relationship between appearance orientation and sun tanning to look attractive in general was positive,  $\beta = .497$ , and the nature of the relationship between internalized homophobia regarding revealing one's sexual orientation to others was positive,  $\beta = .311$ . However, since higher scores on the NHAH indicate lower internalized homophobia, when appearance orientation increases and internalized homophobia due to revealing one's sexual orientation decreases, a person is more likely to sun tan to look attractive in general. No other independent variables were significant.

A regression analysis demonstrated that appearance orientation was significantly related to salon tanning to look attractive in general,  $F(1, 30) = 7.034$ ,  $p = .013$ , and accounted for roughly 20% of the variance explained,  $R^2 = .195$ . The nature of the relationship was positive,  $\beta = .442$ . Therefore, as appearance orientation increases a person is more likely to salon tan to look attractive in general. No other independent variables were significant.

A regression analysis demonstrated that appearance evaluation was significantly related to cosmetic tanning to look attractive in general,  $F(1, 23) = 10.224$ ,  $p = .004$ , and accounted for roughly 32% of the variance explained,  $R^2 = .317$ . The nature of the relationship was positive,  $\beta = .563$ . No other independent variables were significant. Therefore, as appearance evaluation increases a person is more likely to cosmetic tan to look attractive in general.

#### 4. Tanning to socialize

A regression analysis demonstrated that no independent variables were significantly related to the motive of sun tanning to socialize. Yet, this motive was related to cosmetic tanning.

A regression analysis demonstrated that appearance evaluation was significantly related to cosmetic tanning to socialize,  $F(1, 23) = 5.309$ ,  $p = .031$ , and accounted for roughly 19% of the variance explained,  $R^2 = .194$ . The nature of the relationship was positive,  $\beta = .441$ . Therefore, as appearance evaluation increases a person is more likely to cosmetic tan to socialize. No other independent variables were significant.

TABLE I  
MEANS (STANDARD DEVIATIONS) FOR SCALES USED FOR DEPENDENT VARIABLES

Mean (SD)	Self-esteem	Internalized homophobia	IH due to own sexual orientation	IH due to other's sexual orientation	IH due to revealing sexual orientation	Appearance Orientation	Appearance Evaluation	Appearance Satisfaction
Sun tan	39.86 (6.2)	12.35 (1.58)	4.16 (.59)	4.20 (.47)	3.99 (.69)	43.62 (8.76)	24.23 (5.770)	30.02 (6.36)
Salon Tan	40.45 (5.45)	12.27 (1.64)	4.09 (.64)	4.15 (.41)	4.03 (.69)	45.94 (10.15)	24.76 (5.53)	31.50(6.67)
Cosmetic Tan	42.04 (4.99)	12.52 (1.66)	4.16 (.59)	4.20 (.47)	3.99 (.69)	47.58 (9.28)	24.92 (3.70)	30.40 (5.08)

TABLE II  
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR SCALES USED FOR  
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

	Mean	Standard Deviation
<b>Sun tanning</b>		
To look masculine	2.23	1.01
To look attractive to (potential) partners	3.59	10.2
To look attractive n general	4.06	.90
To socialize	2.56	1.25
To meet a peer standard	2.14	.99
For personal satisfaction	3.86	1.01
<b>Salon Tanning</b>		
To look masculine	2.09	.99
To look attractive to (potential) partners	3.59	1.18
To look attractive n general	4.03	1.12
To socialize	1.67	.82
To meet a peer standard	2.12	1.23
For personal satisfaction	3.82	1.16
<b>Cosmetic Tanning</b>		
To look masculine	2.04	1.06
To look attractive to (potential) partners	3.64	1.08
To look attractive n general	4.24	.88
To socialize	2.04	1.02
To meet a peer standard	1.88	1.05
For personal satisfaction	3.76	1.17

#### 5. Tanning to meet a peer standard

A regression analysis demonstrated that appearance orientation was significantly related to sun tanning to meet a peer standard,  $F(1,49) = 8.190$ ,  $p=.006$ , and accounted for roughly 15% of the variance explained,  $R^2 = .146$ . The nature of the relationship was positive,  $\beta = .382$ . Therefore, as appearance orientation increases a person is more likely to sun tan to meet a peer standard. No other independent variables were significant.

A regression analysis demonstrated that internalized homophobia due to revealing one's sexual orientation to others, self-esteem, and appearance satisfaction were significantly related to salon tanning to meet a peer standard,  $F(3, 30) = 6.430$ ,  $p = .002$ , and accounted for roughly 42% of the variance explained,  $R^2 = .4178$ . The nature of the relationship between internalized homophobia due to revealing one's sexual orientation to others and salon tanning to meet a peer standard was negative,  $\beta = -.339$ . However, higher scores on the NHAI indicate lower internalized homophobia. The nature of the relationship between self-esteem and salon tanning to meet a peer standard was negative,  $\beta = -.592$ . The nature of the relationship between appearance orientation and salon tanning to meet a peer standard was positive,  $\beta = .391$ . Therefore, as internalized homophobia due to revealing one's sexual orientation to others increases, and self-esteem decreases, and appearance satisfaction increases, a person is more likely to salon tan to meet a peer standard. No other independent variables were significant.

A regression analysis demonstrated that no independent variables were significantly related to cosmetic tanning to meet a peer standard.

#### 6. Tanning for personal satisfaction

A regression analysis demonstrated that appearance orientation was significantly related to sun tanning for personal satisfaction,  $F(1, 49) = 7.270$ ,  $p = .010$ , and accounted for roughly 13% of the variance explained,  $R^2 = .132$ . The nature of the relationship was positive,  $\beta = .363$ . Therefore, as appearance orientation increases a person is more likely to sun tan for personal satisfaction. No other independent variables were significant.

A regression analysis demonstrated that appearance orientation was significantly related to salon tanning for personal satisfaction,  $F(1, 29) = 7.878$ ,  $p = .009$ , and accounted for 22% of the variance explained,  $R^2 = .220$ . The nature of the relationship was positive,  $\beta = .469$ . Therefore, as appearance orientation increases a person is more likely to salon tan for personal satisfaction. No other independent variables were significant.

A regression analysis demonstrated appearance evaluation was significantly related to cosmetic tanning for personal satisfaction,  $F(1, 23) = 5.599$ ,  $p = .027$ , and accounted for 27% of the variance explained,  $R^2 = .220$ . The nature of the relationship was positive,  $\beta = .450$ . Therefore, as appearance evaluation increases a person is more likely to cosmetic tan for personal satisfaction. No other independent variables were significant.

## V. DISCUSSION

### A. Body Image

Various dimensions of body image apparently impact motives for tanning among gay men. Appearance orientation was related to sun tanning and salon tanning, indicating that men invested in their appearance have internalized the notion that a tan is visually attractive. Appearance orientation was positively related to sun tanning to look attractive to (potential) partners, to look attractive in general, to meet a peer standard, and for personal satisfaction. Appearance orientation was positively related to salon tanning to look attractive to (potential) partners, to look attractive in general, and for personal satisfaction.

Appearance satisfaction was positively related to salon tanning to meet a peer standard. This indicates that gay men have internalized the notion that a tan is perceived as attractive and are willing to risk their health to achieve it. It also supports [32]'s argument that peers exert a strong influence on matters aesthetic. However, these findings contrast with those of [7] who found that appearance motivations did not show any direct or interaction effects in the prediction of salon tanning intentions. Perhaps because our study carefully dissected appearance motivations, we were able to find stronger connections.

Only appearance evaluation was positively related to cosmetic tanning, indicating that men satisfied with their appearance are not willing to put their health at risk via sun

and salon tanning. However, such men apparently desire the aesthetic of tanned skin and seek an alternative means to procure it. Men used cosmetic tanning to look attractive in general, to socialize, and for personal satisfaction. That cosmetic tanning was the only type of tanning method significantly linked to socializing indicates that gay men use the process not only to change the hue of their skin, but also as a means to interact with other people at tanning salons. Appearance satisfaction, however, was not related to any motive for tanning. This is a logical outcome given the Body Areas Satisfaction subscale measures approval with specific body parts and tanning is not necessarily isolated to one area of the body.

### B. Self-esteem

Self-esteem was only related to salon tanning to meet a peer standard and that was in conjunction with internalized homophobia due to other's sexual orientation and appearance satisfaction. This aligns with research that one's internalized homophobia increases as one's self-esteem decreases [40], and indicates that gay men may tan to seek identity among peers as a way to improve their sense of self.

### C. Internalized Homophobia

Internalized homophobia due to one's own sexual orientation was not related to any motive for tanning in any venue (sun, salon, or cosmetic). However, internalized homophobia due to other's sexual orientation and due to revealing one's sexual orientation to others was related to tanning motives. This means that gay men's tanning is not related to feelings of one's own sexual orientation but due to what gay men think about gay men in general and what gay men think others will think of them. Hence, tanning is about perceptions of others not perceptions of themselves. Thus, tanning is perceived to be an appearance ideal in this subculture, and perhaps to what other gay men will think of them specifically.

Men with internalized homophobia due to other's sexual orientation are concerned with the gay population in general [12]. Specifically, they are cognizant of the gay population acting, behaving, and looking stereotypical. This research finds that men with *high* internalized homophobia due to other's sexual orientation are likely to salon tan in order to look masculine. This could mean that such gay men believe a tan is an integral part of manhood or masculinity and do not view a tan as a gay stereotype. Rather, perhaps they view a tan as indicative of risk or machismo.

Men with internalized homophobia due to revealing one's sexual orientation to others are concerned with looking stereotypical in the eyes of others [12]. This research finds that men with *low* internalized homophobia due to revealing one's sexual orientation to others are likely to sun tan to look attractive in general. These men are not worried that others will view them as the stereotype or do not believe that a tan is a gay stereotype, but believe that a tan enhances one's beauty.

However, men with *high* internalized homophobia due to revealing one's sexual orientation to others are likely to salon tan to meet a peer standard. While these men may not be

comfortable with other people knowing their sexual orientation, they may find psychological comfort with affiliating themselves with a group through appearance.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Sun and salon tanning are related to premature aging, wrinkles, and skin cancers, yet people continue to engage in these potentially-risky appearance management behaviors for immediate results. The findings of this research were that men *invested* in their appearance seek risky means of tanning (e.g., sun and salon) but men *satisfied* with their appearance seek safer means (e.g., cosmetic tanning); and that tanning is related to two components of internalized homophobia: attitudes towards the gay population in general and discomfort with revealing one's sexual orientation to others.

This research also supports Goffman's thesis [31] on impression formation, that people play a role in society and strive to make positive impressions upon others, and adds to the existing literature to demonstrate that for gay men, the level of appearance orientation, appearance satisfaction, and internalized homophobia influences what impressions are desired. This research also aligns with [15] who argued that the body is an important part of one's aesthetic, especially as it relates to one's personal and public identity. This research helps us better understand appearance motives for tanning – looking attractive (in general and for potential partners) and peer standard for sun and salon; attractiveness, socialization, and personal satisfaction for cosmetic tanning.

Advocates for public health in the gay community can use this research to tailor public health messages. Perhaps those most prone to listen to messages of health risk are those with high appearance evaluation, and that those at greatest risk are those with high appearance orientation, thus messages to the latter may need a double focus (health and appearance).

This research should be read in light of a few limitations. First, the respondents were not asked the frequency of their tanning. Ascertaining frequency of tanning, may shed additional light on individual behaviors. Perhaps men who are invested in their appearance sun or salon tan with greater frequency than men who are less invested in their appearance. Second, the respondents were given a limited number of tanning motives from which to choose. Other motives may also be applicable, such tanning for a special occasion (e.g., circuit party or vacation). Third, the method of tanning was analyzed singularly (e.g., sun or salon or cosmetic) but it is highly likely that, as [5] noted, people often use more than one method. Analyzing multiple tanning methods may also shed light on the interaction of body image, self-esteem, and internalized homophobia. Yet, despite these limitations, the research at hand does provide a base for future studies.

Future studies can continue this line of research by examining frequency of tanning method as it relates to appearance orientation, appearance evaluation, and internalized homophobia due to other's sexual orientation and due to revealing one's sexual orientation. Another study can use qualitative methods such as focus groups or in-depth interviews to examine how tanning is integrated into the lives of gay men, focusing on, for example, what is the

psychological makeup of people who tan intermittently or only for special occasions versus people who tan habitually.

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