

# INVESTIGATING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN CELEBRITY WORSHIP

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## ABSTRACT

*Evidence was found that perceived similarity with a famous person in gender, age, cultural background and attitudes increases the attraction towards this celebrity. Previous studies have also revealed that sexual minority individuals and those with a sexual attraction towards a famous person of the opposite gender are more likely to become obsessed with their favorite celebrity. Based on these findings, this study aimed to explore how heteronormative attitudes gender role and behavioral expectations for men and women are associated with celebrity worship in LGB+ and heterosexual individuals. Heterosexual individuals with a favorite celebrity of the same gender reported stronger heteronormative attitudes in terms of gender roles and behaviors than LGB+ individuals. Furthermore, this aspect of heteronormative attitudes predicted higher levels of celebrity worship in individuals with a favorite celebrity of their own gender, irrespective of sexual orientation. However, heteronormative attitudes explained only a small proportion of the variance of celebrity worship, indicating that heteronormativity has no substantial impact on celebrity admiration.*

**Keywords:** Investigating, Association, Worship, Heteronormative.

## INTRODUCTION

Individual differences in celebrity admiration have been of considerable research interest in the past two decades. These studies have mainly focused on the psychological harms cognitive deficits and social difficulties related to excessive celebrity worship. However, little attention has been paid to attitudes and beliefs that can possibly alter the extent of celebrity admiration (Allen et al., 2015). Recent studies have revealed that lesbian, gay, bisexual and other sexual minority individuals with increased feelings of loneliness and those with a favorite celebrity of the opposite gender tend to exhibit higher levels of celebrity admiration. This study seeks further support for the individual differences in celebrity worship levels and heterosexual individuals by extending the investigation to gender-based celebrity selection (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005). Furthermore, considering the influential role of LGB+ media personae in the identity formation of LGB+ individuals, this study endeavors to address the question of whether existing heteronormative attitudes and beliefs are associated with the level of celebrity admiration in LGB+ or heterosexual individuals (Collisson et al., 2020).

Previous studies have also revealed that influential LGB+ media personae can serve as a role model for LGB+ audiences. In a similar vein, Bond found that a favorite celebrity can be a major source of information about romantic relationships for LGB+ youth, which can further strengthen the emotional attachment for the celebrity. Recent studies have also indicated that gender roles and behaviors represented in media products of contemporary popular culture can influence consumers' attitudes and beliefs about masculinity and femininity, and celebrities play a central role in the formation of gender identity among youth. Considering that heterosexual

individuals are expected to hold stronger heteronormative attitudes, it can be assumed that there is a stronger association between heteronormativity and celebrity admiration among heterosexual individuals compared to LGB+ individuals. Needs for integrity and structure were identified as fundamental psychological needs audiences are expected to seek media content and figures that are consistent with their personal needs. Furthermore, celebrity worshippers are assumed to have a poorly integrated identity structure, so we hypothesized that heterosexual individuals, who hold more heteronormative attitudes and beliefs, will develop a stronger attachment to their favorite celebrity in order to maintain the consistency of their attitudes, which can contribute to the development of their identity structure (Reeves et al., 2012; Maltby & Day, 2011). To gain a more nuanced understanding of the association between heteronormative attitudes and the quality of attachment to a favorite celebrity, romantic and erotic attraction was also investigated in the present study. To test, regression models were constructed exploring possible differences in the association of heteronormative attitudes and beliefs with celebrity worship across groups based on sexual orientation and opposite/same-gender celebrity worship. Provided that significant differences were found between the four major groups in terms of gender and age in the present sample, gender and age were added to the models as control variables.

## CONCLUSION

Finally, partial support was found for the fifth hypothesis postulating that heteronormative attitudes predict stronger romantic and erotic feelings for an opposite-gender celebrity. This association was only demonstrated among LGB+ individuals. One possible explanation for this result is that LGB+ individuals with existing heteronormative attitudes and beliefs about gender roles and behavior consider their favorite celebrity as an ideal partner instead of a role model. Indeed, Lin and Lin suggested that sexual attraction is associated with stronger emotional attachment to a celebrity. Further confirming this assumption, LGB+ individuals with a favorite celebrity of the opposite gender expressed the highest levels of romantic and erotic attraction towards their favorite star in the present study. However, further research is needed to gain a nuanced understanding of motives underlying celebrity admiration.

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**Received:** 06-Jun-2022, Manuscript No. JIACS-22-12262; **Editor assigned:** 07-Jun-2022, PreQC No. JIACS-22-12262 (PQ); **Reviewed:** 20-Jun-2022, QC No. JIACS-22-12262; **Revised:** 23-Jun-2022, Manuscript No JIACS-22-12262(R); **Published:** 29-Jun-2022