Shame on Me? Examining Impression Management and Appearance-Related Shame Across the Menstrual Cycle

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**Shame on Me?**
**Examining Impression Management and Appearance-Related Shame**
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**Introduction**

**Impression management (IM)**
- Deliberately presenting oneself in a way to control the impression made on others
- IM is activated with goal-oriented behavior (Guadagno & Cialdini, 2007), including mating:
  - Women try to make a positive impression on others by enhancing their appearance at high fertility (Haselton & Gildersleeve, 2016)

**Conception Risk or Fertility**
- The probability of conception per act of sex on a given day of a woman’s menstrual cycle; ranges from 0-9.4% (Wilcox et al., 2001)
- Women’s highest conception risk occurs during ovulation, roughly days 12-14 of her menstrual cycle

**Shame**
- Unpleasant self-conscious emotion associated with wrongdoings
- Appearance-related shame arises from negative evaluations of one’s body or dress from the self or others (Schooler, Ward, Merriwether, & Caruthers, 2005)

**Method**

**Design & Participants**
- Repeated-measures design with participants completing all measures at high fertility and at low fertility
- N = 83, cis-female UD undergraduate students

**Measures:**
- Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding IM subscale (Paulhus, 1988)
- Objectified Body Consciousness Appearance-related Shame Subscale (McKinley & Hyde, 1996)

**Results**

Impression management and fertility did not interact to predict appearance-related shame at high and low fertility.

There was a main effect of impression management:
- IM was significantly higher at high fertility ($M = 4.04$, $SD = 0.82$) compared to low fertility ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 0.83$), $F(1,82) = 5.33$, $p = .02$.

**Discussion**

- Impression management and fertility did not interact to predict appearance related-shame at high and low fertility.
- The main effects of appearance-related shame and impression management are consistent with previous research
  - Women feel better about their appearance at high fertility and try to make a more positive impression on potentialmates (Haselton & Gildersleeve, 2016)

**Hypothesis**

Appearance-related shame will vary by impression management and fertility:
- Higher levels of impression management will be associated with higher appearance-related shame at low fertility

**Conclusion**

- The present findings support the cyclical nature of goal salience as a function of fertility
- Future research should seek to replicate these findings in a larger sample and verify the onset of ovulation