



## OPEN ACCESS

## EDITED BY

Jes L. Matsick,  
The Pennsylvania State University (PSU),  
United States

## REVIEWED BY

Federica Spaccatini,  
University of Perugia, Italy  
Jeroen Vaes,  
University of Trento, Italy

## \*CORRESPONDENCE

Gemma Sáez  
✉ gsaez@us.es

RECEIVED 18 July 2024

ACCEPTED 06 December 2024

PUBLISHED 13 January 2025

## CITATION

Sáez G, Riemer AR, Klein O and Gervais SJ  
(2025) The Evaluative Process Model of  
Objectification: how men's evaluations of  
patriarchal security and women's fit with  
conventional beauty and sexuality norms  
interact to predict perpetration of sexually  
objectifying behaviors.  
*Front. Soc. Psychol.* 2:1466577.  
doi: 10.3389/frsps.2024.1466577

## COPYRIGHT

© 2025 Sáez, Riemer, Klein and Gervais. This  
is an open-access article distributed under the  
terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution  
License \(CC BY\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). The use, distribution or  
reproduction in other forums is permitted,  
provided the original author(s) and the  
copyright owner(s) are credited and that the  
original publication in this journal is cited, in  
accordance with accepted academic practice.  
No use, distribution or reproduction is  
permitted which does not comply with these  
terms.

# The Evaluative Process Model of Objectification: how men's evaluations of patriarchal security and women's fit with conventional beauty and sexuality norms interact to predict perpetration of sexually objectifying behaviors

Gemma Sáez <sup>1\*</sup>, Abigail R. Riemer <sup>2</sup>, Olivier Klein <sup>3</sup> and Sarah J. Gervais <sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Social Psychology, University of Seville, Seville, Spain, <sup>2</sup>Department of Life Sciences, Carroll University, Waukesha, WI, United States, <sup>3</sup>Center for Social and Cultural Psychology, Université Libre de Bruxelles, Brussels, Belgium, <sup>4</sup>Department of Psychology, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, NE, United States

Scholars have expanded upon the original scope of Objectification Theory, but theoretical and empirical research on objectification from the perceiver perspective remains underdeveloped. The literature focused on the perceiver perspective has narrowly focused on objectification perpetrated toward extremely attractive and sexualized women, despite objectification being a universal experience amongst all women. In the current paper, we propose the Evaluative Process Model of Objectification (EPO) to predict *who* sexually objectifies and *why* women are treated as sexual objects, to then answer *toward whom* and *how* sexual objectification may be directed. In particular, the EPO considers perceived attributes of female targets in conjunction with male perceivers' feelings of power. Extending Objectification Theory's suggestion that objectification is pervasive because of the patriarchal cultures women live in, the EPO suggests that objectification is instrumental in men's attempts to preserve and regain their position within the patriarchy. Among men who endorse patriarchal ideologies, perceived patriarchy threat or security is theorized to interact with evaluations of female targets to predict whether objectifying perceptions of female targets result in benevolent, derogative, or dismissive objectifying behaviors. After articulating the EPO, we propose hypotheses to be tested in future research and conclude with a discussion of theoretical and practical implications.

## KEYWORDS

sexual objectification, patriarchy and masculinity, sexism, self-objectification, power

## Introduction

*A young woman was recently interviewed for a teaching job in philosophy by the academic chairman of a large department. During most of the interview, so she reported, the man stared fixedly at her breasts. In this situation, the woman is a bosom, not a job candidate. Was this department chairman guilty only of a confusion between business and pleasure? Scarcely. He stares at her breasts for his sake, not hers. Her wants and needs not only play no role in the encounter but, because of the direction of his attention, she is discomfited, feels humiliated, and performs badly. Not surprisingly, she fails to get the job. Much of the time, sexual objectification occurs independently of what women want; it is something done to us against our will. It is clear from this example that the objectifying perception that splits a person into parts serves to elevate one interest above another. Now it stands revealed not only as a way of perceiving, but as a way of maintaining dominance as well.*

Bartky (1990, p. 5)

Sexual objectification occurs when women are reduced to their appearance, body, or sexual body parts or functions, to the extent that these features are considered capable of representing them (Bartky, 1990; Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997). As Bartky's account implies, feminist scholars have long suggested that sexual objectification of women, whether enacted through extreme forms of sexual harassment and assault or more subtle instances of appearance commentary and gazes, acts as a tool to create, reinforce, and maintain patriarchy by stripping women of their humanity and putting those who exercise their humanity (e.g., women who opt out of conventional appearance management practices) back in their place (Bartky, 1990; Langton, 2009; MacKinnon, 1987; Manne, 2017; Nussbaum, 1995). Whether objectification occurs through overt sexualization of women, or through an increased focus on their appearance, reducing women to their sexuality or appearance leads perceivers to animalistically and mechanistically dehumanize women (Morris et al., 2018). Dehumanized perceptions are especially troublesome given the pervasive nature of objectification within women's lives. Indeed, as Karen Horney observed 8 decades ago, Western culture promotes men's right to treat women as sexual objects as if they exist for men's consumption, independently of their age or status (Westcott, 1986; see also Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997; Schur, 1983); consistently, empirical research reveals that women of all ages (Augustus-Horvath and Tylka, 2009; Kellie et al., 2019), shapes and sizes (Calogero, 2004; Calogero et al., 2019), races and ethnicities (Carr et al., 2014; Watson et al., 2012), and sexual and gender identities (Hill and Fischer, 2008) report experiencing sexual objectification with negative consequences (see Roberts et al., 2018; for recent review).

At the same time, an inspection of studies on objectification perpetration—that is, the burgeoning literature on when, why, and with what consequences people sexually objectify others (see Bernard et al., 2018; Pecini et al., 2023; Roberts et al., 2018)—reveals that almost all studies on other-objectification have focused on dehumanizing consequences of sexually objectifying young, well-proportioned, feminine women who fit societal standards of

beauty (c.f., Carr et al., 2014; Gervais et al., 2013; Holland and Haslam, 2016). Indeed, at first blush, one might assume that sexual objectification is only directed toward scantily clad lingerie and underwear models or celebrities. No doubt these women are sexually objectified with grave consequences including failing to attribute agency, competence, warmth, and moral status (Heflick and Goldenberg, 2009; Loughnan et al., 2010), and likening these women to animals (Vaes et al., 2011) and objects (Bernard et al., 2012; Cikara et al., 2011; Gervais et al., 2012). However, research exploring women's experiences suggests that objectification is not an experience unique to exceptionally attractive or sexualized women alone (Gervais et al., 2013; Holland et al., 2017; Holland and Haslam, 2013; Keel et al., 2024; Kozee et al., 2007; Raj et al., 2024; Riemer et al., 2018). How do we reconcile the literature on objectification from the perceiver perspective, which focuses primarily on when, why, and with what consequences very attractive women are objectified, with studies from the target perspective, which suggest that objectification is ubiquitous in patriarchal cultures—that is, all women, regardless of attractiveness, have experienced objectification (Roberts et al., 2018)? One reason the answers to these questions remain elusive is because theory and related research on objectification from the perceiver perspective remains underdeveloped with respect to *who* engages in sexual objectification and *why* women are sexually objectified. Insight into this question might allow us to then answer *toward whom* objectification may be directed and *how* they are treated as objects.

In an effort to reconcile these literatures and provide a roadmap for future research in this important, but understudied topic, we offer the Evaluative Process Model of Objectification (EPO; Figure 1). The EPO takes up the notion articulated by objectification theory (Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997), that due to living in a society imbued with heterosexuality, all women are sexually objectified by heterosexual men in ways that reinforce patriarchy. While research indicates that women (see Bernard et al., 2018; Pecini et al., 2023; Roberts et al., 2018) and gay men (e.g., Kozak et al., 2009) objectify women, the underlying motivations of women and gay men appear to be somewhat distinct from those of heterosexual men (e.g., Ruzzante et al., 2024; Vaes et al., 2011). Given our focus on patriarchy maintenance and restoration (which benefits heterosexual men in a differential manner than others), the EPO prioritizes predicting heterosexual men's objectification of women, while acknowledging that future research should explore how other people's (women, gay men, transgender, and gender diverse individuals) objectification of women also maintains patriarchy (see Theoretical Implications, Directions for Future Research, and Conclusion).

Building on psychological research that highlights objectification as an attentional and person perception process (Bernard et al., 2018) and Bartky's (1990) notion of objectification as "way of perception" giving rise to objectifying treatment, we differentiate objectifying *perceptions* (i.e., disproportionate attention to appearance and sexuality with failed human attribution), *evaluations* (i.e., judgments about women's worth based on appearance and sexuality), and *behaviors* (i.e., appearance-based and sexual gazes, language, and physical contact). To shed light on the myriad manifestations of objectifying behaviors, we place the objectification literature in conversation with research on sexual violence, including sexual

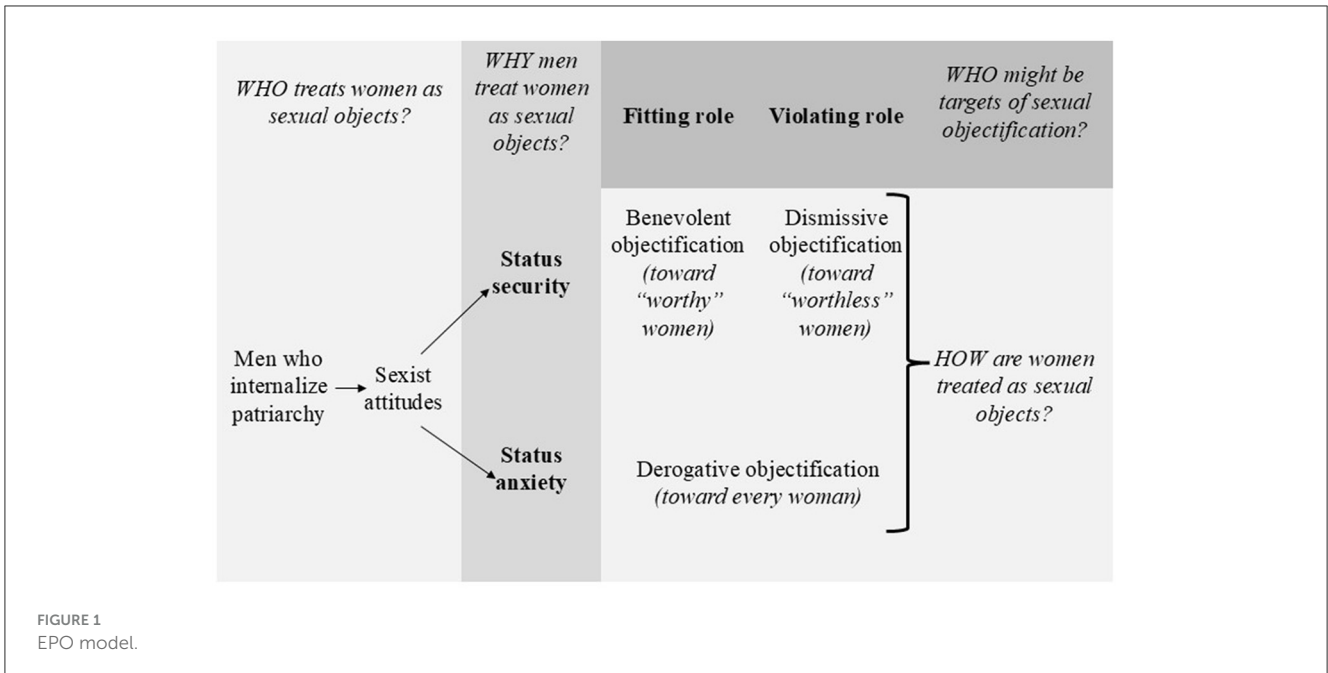


FIGURE 1  
EPO model.

and street harassment, sexual assault, and appearance-based micro-aggressions. For example, many forms of street harassment and sexual harassment involve objectification (uninvited and unwanted sexual attention), so studies from these literatures are included to support the EPO. However, not all instances of street and sexual harassment are directly objectifying—some may involve non-sexual physical assault or gender-based insults targeting intelligence, personality, and accomplishments. While the EPO specifically focuses on the role of objectifying perceptions and evaluations on objectifying treatment, sexual objectification undergirds and enables many forms of disparate treatment of women along with other forms of gender oppression (e.g., stereotyping, essentialism, backlash, women’s underrepresentation in legal, economic, political, and public spheres, Fairchild, 2023; Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997; Gervais and Eagan, 2014).

Integrating literatures on sexist ideologies, power, and objectification, we suggest that men who have internalized patriarchal societal norms (i.e., that men have and ought to have power over women) may adopt an objectifying orientation, subjecting all women to some level of sexualized perception and evaluation, but the specific ways and contexts in which objectification might be wielded, depends on the degree to which the patriarchal system is perceived as secure or under threat and whether women fit conventional gender roles of feminine attractiveness and sexuality (Mahalik et al., 2005; Parent and Moradi, 2011). Because patriarchy operates in conjunction with other systems of power (e.g., racism, ageism, and ableism), women’s objectification experiences may differ based on their ability to conform to cultural ideals. White, young, thin, heterosexual, cisgender women without disabilities are more likely to align with societal beauty and sexuality standards compared to racial and ethnic minority women, older women, fat women, sexual minority women, transgender women, and those with disabilities. For example, Western beauty and sexual ideals often conflate femininity with Whiteness and heterosexuality, so women with

darker skin face additional disadvantages due to colourism (Craddock et al., 2023) and queer women experience more marginalization and violence due to entrenched heterosexism. Intersectional identities place women in various positions in the social hierarchy (Cole, 2009), influencing how they may be perceived in terms of attractiveness and sex appeal. The EPO suggests that women with different intersecting identities (e.g., Black women, queer women, middle-aged, and elderly women) may experience distinct forms of objectification, depending on how they are perceived to fit with the cultural ideal and men’s experiences with the patriarchal system.

The EPO introduces distinct manifestations of sexual objectification under these conditions in theoretically predictable ways. First, we suggest that most existing research that has focused on the predictors and outcomes of objectification for very attractive women can be categorized as ostensibly benevolent objectification—objectification that reduces women to sexual objects with the veneer of positive regard—in which attractive women are *hyper-visible* when the patriarchal system is secure. Like benevolent sexism (Glick and Fiske, 1996), benevolent objectification occurs with seemingly positive sentiment, but is specific to seeing and treating women as sexual objects. Despite the seemingly positive valence, such objectification does not confer actual benevolence, dignity, and respect. Instead, it is often enacted in ways that allow men to justify and legitimize their objectifying behaviors under a cloak of plausible deniability (e.g., she must have wanted it; what’s the big deal, it’s just a compliment?). The outcomes of objectification, even if benevolent, are decidedly negative, including dehumanization (Heflick et al., 2011; Loughnan et al., 2010; Pacilli et al., 2017, 2019; Vaes et al., 2011), reduced empathy (Cogoni et al., 2018), devaluation of women in the workplace (Fasoli et al., 2018; Glick et al., 2005), as well as tolerance of violence and negative attitudes toward violence victims (Gramazio et al., 2018; Loughnan et al., 2013; Spaccatini et al., 2019, 2023).

At the same time, women who oppose conventional gender and beauty expectations may be rendered *invisible* under patriarchal security. That is, some behaviors stemming from objectifying perceptions and evaluations may be marked by inattention in which women are overlooked, ignored, or disregarded in the form of dismissive objectification. Invisibility, as a manifestation of denying a female target subjectivity, is increasingly being conceptualized as a manifestation of objectification (Talmon and Ginzburg, 2016). While recipients of dismissive objectification may momentarily escape the surveillance of the relentless objectifying gaze, motivated inattention powerfully communicates women's diminished status (see Goffman, 1972; for similar consideration of civil inattention—ignoring others violates norms about appropriate and permissible social conduct), especially in cultures where women are socialized to believe their appearance and sex appeal to men are amongst their most important features and possibly their only tools in achieving (limited) power (Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997).

Under patriarchy threat we suggest that men engage in derogative objectification—objectification marked by angry or disgusted gazes, criticism, and rejection—in attempts to regain their power and status. When men perceive the patriarchy and their own power to be under threat, women who fit sexual and beauty expectations will remain hyper-visible, but be regarded as excessively focused on appearance or overly sexual while women who violate such roles will become hyper-visible and regarded as neglecting their appearance or inadequately sexual. Sexual, gender, or street harassment involving hostility and insults to women's appearance and sexuality, align with derogative objectification.

Underlying these different forms of objectification are perceptions of women as sexual objects in which myopic attention is paid to their appearance and sexuality at the expense of their human attributes. Objectifying perceptions contribute to appearance and sexual evaluations of worth, resulting in different forms of objectification. Thus, considering Who and Why women are sexually objectified, the EPO can predict both How and Toward Whom objectification is perpetrated.

## Who treats women as sexual objects?

The patriarchal landscape in which objectification occurs suggests that sexual objectification is a gendered phenomenon accompanied by power differentials. Notably, the EPO assumes that objectification occurs within patriarchal cultures, where men dominate, subjugate, and exploit women (Bartky, 1990; Walby, 1989). Importantly, not all men treat women as sexual objects; many men prefer to have authentic relationships with women, treating them as agentic, full-fledged human beings (Nussbaum, 1995). Yet, objectification is frequently perpetrated by men toward women because cultures of patriarchy stem from sexist beliefs (Glick and Fiske, 1996) that rationalize gender power differences favoring men (O'Neil, 2008) and essentialize women as either good or bad (e.g., the Madonna or Whore dichotomy, Bareket et al., 2018). Feminist scholars have outlined links between patriarchal societies and women's frequent interpersonal experiences of sexual objectification (e.g., Connell, 1987; Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997), even suggesting that sexual objectification is one of the primary

means of reinforcing patriarchy by subordinating women (Bartky, 1990; MacKinnon, 1987).

Consistent with these theoretical tenants, existing empirical research suggests that patriarchy supportive ideologies predict sexual objectification. For example, people with higher social dominance orientation are motivated to preserve existing hierarchies between groups, including men having more power than women (Pratto et al., 1994; see also Cikara et al., 2011). Bareket and Shnabel (2020; see also Bareket et al., 2018) have found that sexual objectification was used as a strategy for restoring patriarchy by men who have higher social dominance orientation. Like social dominance orientation, right-wing authoritarianism also focuses on maintaining power differentials, with an emphasis on submission to authority (Altemeyer, 1988). Researchers have found that people with average and high levels of right-wing authoritarianism are more likely to blame sexualized (vs. non-sexualized) victims of street harassment (Spaccatini et al., 2019). Likewise, gender system justification beliefs (Jost and Kay, 2005) legitimize existing gender arrangements with men having more power than women and these system justifying beliefs predict more sexual objectification (Bareket et al., 2018, see also Calogero and Jost, 2011). Considering the connection between the perpetration of sexual objectification and sexist attitudes (Bareket et al., 2018; Gervais et al., 2018), along with power dynamics that uphold patriarchy, biased views of women and belief systems that justify existing social hierarchies—particularly gender-based power disparities—seem to be crucial factors in understanding the perpetration of objectification.

In attempts to justify and maintain power differences, *sexist beliefs* legitimize ideologies (e.g., social dominance orientation, right-wing authoritarianism, system justification) that promote gender inequality as natural and inevitable through notions of appropriate gender roles—descriptive and injunctive norms about how women and men actually and ought to think and behave (Glick and Fiske, 2001). Indeed, sexism has been identified as a key ideology used to legitimize differential perceptions of women depending on their compliance with traditional gender roles. Distinct from other forms of prejudice, sexist beliefs are often ambivalent, involving not only hostile contempt toward women, but also supposed benevolence and appreciation (Glick and Fiske, 1996). While different in terms of valence, anchoring both forms of sexist attitudes are traditional gender expectations and the assumption that women are the weaker sex. On the one hand, benevolent sexism rewards women who fit beauty expectations and traditional gender roles, while, on the other hand, hostile sexism punishes women who do not conform, including perceptions that some women use their attractiveness and sexuality to manipulate men (Glick and Fiske, 1996, 2001). Compared to other group-based relations (e.g., race or class-based), a unique dyadic dynamic emerges in gendered relations because men are higher in power but are also interpersonally dependent on women for satisfying sexual desires. This dynamic results in ambivalent attitudes in which women are benevolently idealized as romantic love objects that need protecting (Guttentag and Secord, 1983) while simultaneously seen through a lens of hostility when perceived as using their sexual “power” over men (Glick and Fiske, 1996). Sexist attitudes therefore not only strip women of power by suggesting they lack competence and agency beyond their stereotypically feminine abilities, but also

strip women of their humanity suggesting that women are merely objects, that if controlled properly, can be useful to men.

Empirical research supports the role of hostile sexism as an antecedent of sexual objectification. Research using fMRI, for example, has shown that hostile sexist men perceive sexualized women as more object-like, failing to attribute them mind (Cikara et al., 2011). Moreover, hostile sexist men report perpetrating gender harassment (Diehl et al., 2018) and objectifying women more frequently than less sexist men (Bareket et al., 2018). Additional correlational research also suggests that more exposure to women portrayed as sexual objects (e.g., objectifying media and video games) predicts greater endorsement of hostile sexist beliefs (Fox and Potocki, 2016; LaCroix et al., 2018). Fewer studies have found that benevolent sexism predicts objectification. For example, Gervais et al. (2018) found that self-reported objectifying behaviors were associated with more benevolent sexism and Salmen and Dhont (2021) showed that people with more benevolent sexism were more likely to blatantly dehumanize women. However, other studies reveal null relations between benevolent sexism and objectification (Adams et al., 2021; Cikara et al., 2011; Harsey and Zurbruggen, 2020). Hostile sexism may be a more reliable predictor of objectification than benevolent sexism; hostile sexism is theorized as an ideological antecedent of sexual objectification because it is more sensitive to power and sexual cues, while benevolent sexism is thought to be more sensitive to traditional gender role-related concerns (e.g., one's ability to perform domestic abilities such as keeping house and raising children, Bareket and Fiske, 2023). At the same time, hostile and benevolent sexism are theorized as two sides of the same coin and together serve to justify the system (Calogero and Jost, 2011). The significant hostile sexism effects that emerge in these studies may also be explained, in part, by the highly sexualized women that are usually included as stimuli. Indeed, a study that focused on women in general, rather than sexualized women in particular, found that both hostile and benevolent sexism predicted enacting objectifying gazes (Gervais et al., 2018; see also Salmen and Dhont, 2021). Thus, while previous research has revealed the relation between sexist beliefs and perpetration of objectification, a more nuanced examination of the function objectification serves for sexist men is warranted; indeed, it would be useful to examine whether hostile and/or benevolent sexism moderate the relation between sexualization and objectification of women in the same study. Given the lack of literature exploring benevolent sexism as a predictor of objectification, it would also be valuable for research to examine the interaction between both forms of sexist attitudes and new conceptualizations of objectification as either benevolent, dismissive, or derogatory.

Like hostile sexism, misogynistic attitudes, including contempt and ingrained prejudice against women, are powerful in restoring threatened patriarchy. Compared to sexism, which justifies patriarchal power by supporting the view that gender differences are natural and inevitable, misogynistic attitudes, defined as hatred or contempt for women, operate solely to reestablish the gender status quo (Manne, 2017) and have a differential coercive function (Richardson-Self, 2018). In other words, if men feel that their power is threatened, they may display misogynistic attitudes and behaviors toward those women who are violating patriarchal norms. For instance, women perceived as feminists (Maass et al.,

2003; Siebler et al., 2008) as well as lesbian women (Hill and Fischer, 2008) experience higher levels of sexual harassment because they are perceived as violating patriarchal standards (Pharr, 1988; Wilkinson, 2008).

Finally, sexist attitudes, such as ambivalent sexism and sexual double standards (e.g., the injunctive norms that women ought to be less sexually active than men and that it is more important for women to be attractive than men, Crawford and Popp, 2003), perpetuate harmful binary thinking that judges women as either “good” or “bad” based on their appearance and sexuality. Endorsement of such dichotomies is connected to both patriarchy justifying ideologies and objectification. For example, a meta-analysis revealed that more endorsement of sexual double standards is associated with more gender inequality in the country in which the study was conducted (Endendijk et al., 2020). The Madonna-Whore dichotomy exemplifies this issue, as it categorizes women based on their sexual appeal and suitability as wives or mothers, which are perceived to be mutually exclusive (e.g., sexy women can't be good mothers, Bareket et al., 2018). Recent work has revealed that men's endorsement of this binary perspective is uniquely linked to both social dominance orientation and system justification as well as ambivalent sexism and sexual double standards (Bareket et al., 2018; Kahalon et al., 2019). While women categorized as a “Madonna” are perceived as chaste and pure amongst other positive traits, women categorized as a “Whore” are perceived as sexually attractive, yet also sexually promiscuous amongst other negative traits. This evaluation not only reinforces women's lower status, but also rationalizes their objectification, suggesting that those deemed “bad” deserve it (Bareket et al., 2018; Kahalon et al., 2019). Indeed, endorsement of both sexual double standards and the Madonna-Whore dichotomy is associated with more objectification (Bareket et al., 2018).

The categorization of women as “good” or “bad” implies that men are not only reducing women to their gendered behaviors around appearance and sexuality, but that objectifying perceptions also include an evaluative process in which a female target is regarded as fitting (hence “good”) or violating (hence “bad”) gender roles connected to appearance and sex. Of course, women are in an impossible bind—they are expected to be sexually empowered in ways that serve men's pleasure, but not promiscuous. The EPO suggests that these determinations of the extent to which women are perceived to fit gendered roles around sexuality and appearance are what shapes whether men's objectifying behaviors toward female targets are benevolent, dismissive, or derogatory in nature.

## Why do men treat women as sexual objects?

Without understanding the chronic power differences between genders, sexual objectification might be seen as inevitable and morally permissible (Orehek and Weaverling, 2017). But in situations of interpersonal sexual objectification, women perceived as sexual objects are powerless victims, whereas men who perceive women as sexual objects are powerful perpetrators of such discrimination (Bargh et al., 1995). As a result, it is no

surprise that feeling social power is a key factor in predicting objectified perceptions of sexualized women (Civile and Obhi, 2016; Xiao et al., 2019). Because patriarchy affords men greater power than women, especially within social situations (Sultana, 2010), increased feelings of power support men's entitlement to use women as tools for satisfying their sexual desires. For example, Fischer et al. (2011) assert that gender power differences result in men feeling entitled to use women as instruments in fulfilling their goals, manifesting in sexual objectification (see also Costello et al., 2020). Indeed, research has revealed that powerful (vs. powerless) men are more prone to approach sexualized women when the woman is perceived as a useful social target (Gruenfeld et al., 2008). Thus, in contexts in which patriarchy is safe and supported, sexist ideologies may give men a sense of sexual entitlement, and powerful men may feel tacit approval to objectify women. Seabrook et al. (2018), for example, found that fraternity membership and related adherence to masculine norms increased acceptance of men's objectifying behaviors, including engaging in objectifying evaluations of women with other men (e.g., rating women on their attractiveness) as well as behaviors directed toward women (e.g., leering and sexual assault). The norms surrounding men's objectification in groups suggests that men may see objectification as a tool to communicate not only their position of power to women, but also to other men. For example, social norms that street harassment is acceptable and expected from men and their peers predicts enactment of these behaviors (Fairchild, 2023). Such norms and entitlement serve to reinforce and maintain patriarchal arrangements, including keeping women out of public spaces.

Given the stability of patriarchy in many Western countries, the majority of research exploring objectification perpetration appears to have been conducted in contexts in which patriarchy is secure, but the literature on sexual aggression provides insight into how threat or insecurity to patriarchal arrangements or one's power may also increase sexual objectification. For example, Malamuth's highly influential confluence model of sexual aggression, points to men's anxieties about their manhood and power as an important contributing factor (Malamuth et al., 1995). To illustrate, Stanaland et al. (2023) found that men vary in response to masculinity threat, whether they internalize (e.g., feel shame) or externalize (e.g., aggress), based on whether their motivations of responding to threat are intrinsic or extrinsic. For men who are concerned about their status in the gender hierarchy among women and other men, objectification of women may serve the purpose of restoring their power relative to others. Likewise, research in the area of intimate partner violence suggests that feeling less powerful than one's partner (e.g., if a man has lower earnings than his woman partner) is a strong predictor of sexual, physical, and psychological abuse (Babcock et al., 1993; Simister, 2013). Thus, sexual entitlement stemming from sexist ideologies may contribute to sexual objectification when men feel powerful, but also if their power or the patriarchy is threatened. Women outperforming men on stereotypically masculine tasks (Maass et al., 2003), reports of women earning more money in their career than their male partners (Tichenor, 2005), or statistics revealing women beginning to outnumber men in stereotypically masculine domains (Babl, 1971) all have the potential to make men, and

sexist men in particular, feel as if their place of power in the gender hierarchy is precarious. Men's sense of power is essential to their feelings of masculinity (Dahl et al., 2015) and research suggests that when they feel that their status of manhood is threatened, they make efforts to reassert their superiority (Waller et al., 2013). From a social identity threat perspective, patriarchy threat implies men's group values are at risk, and derogating the women outgroup may restore balance (Branscombe et al., 1999; Maass et al., 2003). Moreover, because patriarchy explicitly involves men having more power than women, men often compensate feelings of threat with antisocial behaviors like violence (Bosson et al., 2009; Cohn et al., 2009; Vandello et al., 2008), and more specifically violence against women in which sexual aggression reasserts male dominance and female subordination (Murnen, 2015). In this line, Vandello et al. (2008) introduced the Precarious Manhood Theory, suggesting that masculinity is characterized by uncertainty, elusiveness, tenuousness, and the need for social validation and that when manhood is threatened, it activates men's aggression (Vandello et al., 2008), in order to reestablish masculinity certainty.

Thus, in situations in which men's feelings of social power become threatened, sexual objectification may be used as an instrument to regain power. Consistently, in a study conducted by Bareket and Shnabel (2020), when assigned to work under a female boss, men high in social dominance orientation responded to the perceived threat to their power by sexually objectifying a female target. Moreover, some men seek out environments in which objectification is allowed (e.g., breasaurants) and where women feel diminished personal power and control (Szymanski and Mikorski, 2016). Similarly, men who felt chronically low in power, but were given situational power were more likely to report hostile sexist attitudes toward a sexually attractive woman depicted as sexually teasing another man (Williams et al., 2017).

In summary, the majority of research exploring men's objectification of women is conducted within broader cultural contexts in which the patriarchy is secure (as is the default in most contexts), suggesting that in such contexts, men may objectify women as a means to reinforce existing gender roles. Moreover, while most objectification research suggests that high power promotes sexual objectification, an adjacent literature in the area of sexual aggression suggests that threats to power (situationally or chronically induced) may also predict sexual objectification. How might we be able to resolve these seemingly inconsistent literatures? The EPO suggests that patriarchal ideologies and related sexist beliefs set the stage for men to have an objectifying orientation toward women. Sexual objectification may emerge in many situations—when power is secure or threatened—for men who have internalized such ideologies. However, the specific manifestations may vary significantly, depending on the degree to which women conform or violate sex roles connected to sexuality and attractiveness. We suggest that preceding objectification perpetration, men may consider their relative feelings of power while evaluating women in terms of their usefulness; the EPO connects this literature, suggesting that women may be perceived as useful or useless social targets in men's attempts to either affirm and reinforce or regain and restore their position of power within the patriarchy.

## Who might be targets of sexual objectification?

While the original proposition of objectification theory assumed that all women experience objectification as a result of the patriarchal culture they live in [Fredrickson and Roberts \(1997\)](#), amongst the growing literature exploring the perpetration of sexual objectification, the majority of the work has focused on objectification of very attractive and sexualized women who fit the traditional gender norms about beauty (e.g., swimsuit and lingerie models, [Bernard et al., 2012](#); [Vaes et al., 2011](#); celebrities, [Heflick and Goldenberg, 2009](#); see also [Gruenfeld et al., 2008](#)). This work has revealed that sexually attractive women are objectified with grave consequences ([Pecini et al., 2023](#)). However, does this mean that only attractive women who fit traditional gender beauty norms are objectified? Theory and research from recipients' perspectives suggests that *all* women are subject to sexualized evaluation by men ([Kozee et al., 2007](#); [Roberts et al., 2018](#)). For example, women report high levels of objectification ([Kozee et al., 2007](#)) including experiences almost every other day ([Holland and Haslam, 2016](#)). However, some limited research that has examined objectification in subgroups of women has revealed some differences. [Sherman et al. \(2024\)](#), for example, found that while objectification occurs for all women over the life course, it is reduced for women in middle and old age compared to young women. Likewise, the Gendered Racial Microaggressions Scale ([Lewis and Neville, 2015](#)) assesses assumptions of beauty and sexual objectification specific to Black women (e.g., someone made me feel unattractive because of the size of my butt, hips, or thighs, someone objectified me based on physical features as a Black woman), suggesting that Black women may experience additional forms of sexual objectification compared to White women. Moreover, in a representative survey of American women (the #MeToo report, [Raj et al., 2024](#)), the majority of women (83%) reported being targets of sexual harassment and assault, but the extent to which women reported experiencing sexual violence varied by demographics. As an example, women aged 25–49 reported more experiences of sexual harassment over younger and older women, Hispanic women reported more experiences than any other race, and women with a disability reported particularly high rates of sexual harassment and abuse. This resonates with the germinal paper by [Fredrickson and Roberts \(1997\)](#), who alluded to the possibility of differential forms and amounts of objectification when discussing how intersections of oppression may contribute to women's experiences with objectification:

*Certainly not all women experience and respond to sexual objectification in the same way. Unique combinations of ethnicity, class, sexuality, age, and other physical and personal attributes undoubtedly create unique sets of experiences across women, as well as experiences shared by particular subgroups.* (p. 174)

Mirroring and elaborating women's experiences as recipients of objectification, we suggest that the specific ways that objectification is wielded by perpetrators depends on the degree to which the patriarchal system is secure or under threat (see above) and whether women appear to fit conventional gender roles about

beauty and sexuality (or not). Given the idealized and unrealistic beauty standards that cultural norms prescribe for women's bodies, it is difficult (e.g., for young thin women) if not impossible (e.g., for older heavier women) to live up to these standards. As well, adhering to expected gender roles can be challenging due to the conflicting nature of sexual and appearance-based gender roles for women. They are expected to be pure and chaste while also open and available to men's sexual advances (purity and relationship femininity norms, [Parent and Moradi, 2011](#)). They must extensively focus on appearance and engage in appearance management without overdoing it, which may render them vain and superficial. Women are also expected to sexualize themselves, presenting cleavage for the consumption of men, but then expected to cover their breasts for other functional activities such as breast-feeding. These examples reveal that women are "damned if they do, and damned if they don't," illustrating the relentless pressure that patriarchal systems place on women while providing men with the endless justifications to sexually objectify women in almost every circumstance. Therefore, the vast majority of women men encounter and potentially objectify in their daily lives will often be women who neither approximate the cultural ideal nor fit traditional gender roles of attractiveness or sexuality. Indeed, the same woman may engender fit and misfit to conventional roles at the same time, providing justifications for benevolent, dismissive, or derogatory objectification behaviors for men with objectifying orientations when patriarchy is secure or threatened.

While most objectification perpetration work focuses on highly curated and photoshopped images of women from the media (e.g., fashion, celebrity, or pornography outlets), there are a handful of studies that examine objectification directed toward actual, everyday women and this work suggests that the objectifying gaze depends to some degree on women's attractiveness. For example, eye-tracking research using photographs of real-life women reveals that men exhibit the objectifying gaze (e.g., gazing more at breasts, and less at faces) toward highly attractive women relative to average and less attractive women ([Gervais et al., 2013](#); [Riemer et al., 2018](#)). Likewise, [Holland and Haslam \(2013\)](#) found that the bodies of overweight women received less attention than those of thin women, showing that men who objectify women approach some female targets and dismiss others. These findings have been interpreted as evidence that more attractive women are objectified to a greater degree than less attractive women, consistent with related work on highly attractive models and celebrities. However, to selectively direct attention toward women based on attractiveness, an implicit or explicit evaluation process is likely involved, in which men determine which women are worthy of their gaze.

While limited, emerging research is consistent with the perpetration of objectifying behaviors being shaped by an evaluative process in the mind of the objectifying perceiver. For instance, when female targets are depicted with either a focus on their sexuality (i.e., shown wearing lingerie) or on their appearance (i.e., shown as a fashion model), perceivers cognitively objectify the target in different ways, perceiving her as more animal-like when focusing on her sexuality or more object-like when focusing on her appearance ([Morris et al., 2018](#)). Additionally, [Vaes et al. \(2011\)](#) conclude that sexual attraction is essential to understanding men's

objectification of women, implying that men evaluate women's appearance before sexual objectification is perpetrated. As evidence of an evaluative process, women are treated as interchangeable with other women of the same attractiveness level (Gervais et al., 2012), and differential kinds of information is recalled from first impressions of women depending on their attractiveness (Rudman and Borgida, 1995). These memory-related consequences are only possible if men attend in objectifying ways to both attractive and unattractive women. These person perception studies also correspond to men's self-reports of their objectifying behaviors. For example, men who objectify women endorse items such as "It is fun to rate women based on the attractiveness of their bodies" (Morse, 2008) and "I frequently give women a rating based on attractiveness" (Curran, 2004). Men's reports suggest an objectifying evaluative process toward all women, preceding or occurring in tandem with their objectifying behaviors. Even within the original articulation of objectification theory, Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) claim that, "Women's bodies are looked at, evaluated, and always potentially objectified" (p. 175), suggesting that an evaluation process is inherent in the objectification of women. This also implies that regardless of her appearance or sexuality, no woman is safe from the objectifying lens promoted by patriarchy.

If objectification perpetration is evaluative in nature, then men's perpetration (and women's experiences) of objectification varies in terms of valence—the nature of the evaluation. Indeed, Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) highlighted valence in their original articulation of objectification theory suggesting that for women who fit conventional ideals of attractiveness sexual objectification may masquerade as admiration. For example, in the Bartky (1990) experience from the outset, the male interviewer may have justified his leering as appreciation for the woman interviewee's figure. Likewise, men engaging in street harassment may say that a woman is "hot" or "sexy." In comparison, women who do not fit conventional ideals of attractiveness often experience sexual objectification through negatively valenced social evaluations (e.g., commentary about "your big black ass," Carr et al., 2014; Lewis and Neville, 2015; people giving fat people disgusted looks at the grocery store or telling them they need to go on a diet, Lindloff et al., 2024). While objectifying treatment, regardless of valence, represent a form of micro or macro aggressions toward women, benevolent objectification may be particularly insidious because men may find it easier to deny and justify, bystanders and witnesses may identify it as less problematic and blame women for it (Pacilli et al., 2024), and even victims may blame themselves or excuse objectification as harmless (Fairchild and Rudman, 2008; Sheperd, 2019). Despite the potential importance of objectification valence—benevolent or derogative—to our knowledge, the limited research in this area has relied on objectification theory to examine types of objectification women report experiencing (e.g., Calogero et al., 2009; Gervais et al., 2018; Riemer et al., 2020) rather than the perpetration of such acts. Of this limited work, Herbozo and Thompson (2006) provide indirect support for the EPO by arguing that women experience both positive and negative commentary about their weight, body shape, and general appearance. Specifically, female undergraduates reported exposure appearance commentary along with various predictors and outcomes. Consistent with the notion

that derogatory objectification follows from failing to meet the thin ideal while benevolent objectification follows from approximating the thin ideal, Herbozo and Thompson found that heavier women (as indicated with higher BMIs) reported higher scores on the negative weight and shape commentary subscale (e.g., commentary like, "Don't you think you've eaten enough already?") while thinner women (lower BMIs) reported higher scores on the positive weight and shape commentary subscale (e.g., commentary like, "You have a nice body"). Men also report different objectifying behaviors, depending on women's attractiveness (e.g., "I treat attractive women differentially than I treat unattractive women," Curran, 2004). While the literature examining women's varied experiences of objectification is beginning to expand, work has yet to illuminate critical elements that drive the valence of men's objectification.

Within patriarchal cultures, the valence of objectification may hinge on how perceivers appraise women with respect to their sexual value and attractiveness. Several sexist ideas about women are consistent with this notion. Baumeister and Vohs (2004) have suggested that female, but not male sexuality is conferred with value (e.g., virginity, fidelity, and chastity). For example, when dowries are exchanged, a woman's value is determined by her caste or class and she is regarded as spoiled (and worthless) if she is not a virgin. Similarly, traffickers and sex buyers pay more for younger and less sexually experienced women relative to older more experienced women. Even in the context of relationships, husbands who dole out allowances, or "wife bonuses," to their spouses are evaluating whether they meet the criteria of "good" behavior (Martin, 2015). These evaluations also occur in more subtle instances such as when men may be more willing to purchase large gifts (e.g., expensive dinners, jewelry) for a woman deemed more (vs. less) sexually attractive, or how more attractive and scantily clad servers garner better tips compared to less attractive or less provocatively dressed women (e.g., Klein et al., 2020; Moffitt and Szymanski, 2011; Porter, 2013). Even when no money or goods are exchanged, worthy or worthless evaluations may be present when men explicitly or implicitly rank order women, depending on their sexual "worth," based on attractiveness and sexual reputation among others (Bareket et al., 2018; Morse, 2008). Together these examples highlight that explicitly or implicitly, women are evaluated depending on their fit and perception that they are striving toward the patriarchal standard for beauty and sexuality.

Although many examples illustrate everyday instances in which women are evaluated along a continuum of worthless to worthy depending on their fitness in the traditional gender beauty and sexuality norms, few if any objectification studies have explicitly considered this possibility. Whereas previous research relying on objectification theory has deeply explored ways in which objectification reduces women's perceived human (e.g., Heflick and Goldenberg, 2009; Loughnan et al., 2013) and moral (e.g., Pacilli et al., 2017) value, there is a lack of research to our knowledge that has explored factors that affect women's perceived value as a sexual object by men who have internalized patriarchal norms. In line with objectification theory's recognition that not all women experience sexual objectification in the same manner, a core question answered by the EPO is the identification of



key characteristics that lead women to be perceived as worthy or worthless objects in perceiver's eyes.

**Fredrickson and Roberts (1997)** suggest that, in Western cultures, men often regard women's appearance as the primary determinant of their value (see also **Bartky, 1990**). **Baumeister and Vohs (2004)** build on this with Sexual Economic Theory (SET), identifying characteristics that specifically make women valuable in sexist cultures: attractiveness, youth, sexualization, and exclusiveness and mere exposure to a video supporting SET causes an adversarial view of gender relationships (**Fetterolf and Rudman, 2016**). The importance of sexual attractiveness, conceptualized as having a body that fits the cultural ideal of beauty, has been shown to trigger sexual objectification. **Gervais et al. (2013)**, for instance, found that men gazed at attractive women's breasts longer than unattractive women's breasts and **Holland and Haslam (2013)** showed that overweight women elicit fewer objectifying gazes compared to thin female targets. Moreover, the above-mentioned literature implies an evaluative process that precedes the perpetration of sexual objectification in which women are evaluated based on their fit within cultural ideals relating to beauty and sexuality, but given the dearth of research in this area, it is unclear how objectification may manifest.

## How are women treated as sexual objects?

Given that patriarchy pervades the lives of male perceivers and female targets, perceivers' evaluations are theorized to be driven by patriarchal standards and as a result, behaviors manifesting from evaluations may depend on the context. First, men are theorized to appraise the patriarchal status quo. Men who are highly attuned to the gender power balance and any impending threats to patriarchy, thereby adopting a chronic objectification orientation, will rely on objectifying behavior as a tool to either maintain and support existing patriarchy or to re-establish threatened patriarchy. Next, men will evaluate female targets as objects that either align with traditional beauty and sexuality expectations, or as objects that fail to abide by or meet traditional gender norms regarding their expected attractiveness or sex appeal. Together, men's perceptions of the security of the patriarchy and evaluations of women as sexual objects are theorized to interact in ways that predict whether men's objectification of women manifests in objectifying behaviors that are benevolent, derogatory, or dismissive.

## Objectification in a patriarchy secure context

Patriarchy is a pervasive and all-encompassing part of many cultures, meaning that in most contexts, patriarchy and a gender power imbalance favoring men is the default without question. In circumstances in which men's power is secure, the perpetration of sexual objectification may be thought of as a tool to maintain the current status of the patriarchy. This idea complements the target's perspective in which women endorse self-objectification as a way to control their experiences with others by assessing and acting in ways that increase their worth in other people's eyes (**Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997**). In contexts in which the

patriarchy is secure, men's objectifying evaluations of women as fitting or not fitting traditional gender beauty and sexuality norms is hypothesized to predict men's objectifying behaviors toward female targets (i.e., benevolent vs. dismissive objectification). This is represented in **Figure 1**.

## Benevolent objectification of women who embody gender beauty and sexuality norms under patriarchy security

Similar to the ways in which benevolent sexism is labeled as less sexist and prejudicial by women compared to hostile sexism (**Riemer et al., 2014**), objectification often "masquerades as positively valenced admiration" (**Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997**, p. 178). Indeed, benevolent objectification is connected to the admiration offered by benevolent sexism directed toward women who are perceived as deserving this treatment because they fit into the traditional gender roles. For example, women commonly report experiencing objectifying gazes that suggest an approving evaluation of their appearance as well as objectifying commentary implying sexual satisfaction from looking at them (**Holland et al., 2017**). It may seem that receiving benevolent objectification is a positive experience for some women (**Liss et al., 2011**; c.f., **Fairchild and Rudman, 2008**; **Sheperd, 2019**), as these experiences are associated with temporary increases in body image and self-esteem (**Herbozo and Thompson, 2006**), yet potentially result in long-term dissatisfaction when women internalize objectifying self-perceptions that are unrealistic or unattainable. Moreover, research reveals that women report an increased desire to interact with sources of benevolent, relative to derogative objectification (**Gervais et al., 2018**). Benevolent objectification also communicates to women "that their value is highly dependent on the degree to which they complement men through their availability for sexual objectification, bolstering their investment in a system that subordinates them" (**Calogero and Tylka, 2014**, p. 766). In line with this notion, recent research shows that women's increased desire to interact with men who engage in complimentary objectification is specific to women who have internalized enjoyment of sexualization (**Riemer et al., 2020**). Likewise, **Calogero et al. (2009)** found that receiving appearance compliments, relative to appearance criticisms, increased women's self-objectification and body dissatisfaction. Benevolent objectification may align with manifestations of benevolently sexist ideology, and benevolent sexism has stronger detrimental consequences than its hostile behavior counterparts because it is not perceived as negative (**Dardenne et al., 2007**) and is more readily integrated into self-perception (**Dumont et al., 2010**; see also **Hopkins-Doyle et al., 2019**). Based on previous literature (**Carr et al., 2014**), it seems that internalization of such discrimination is the mediational process that explains the long-term negative outcomes of benevolent objectification experiences despite initial apparent positive consequences. As a result, objectification directed toward women who fit conventional gender roles about beauty and sexuality (e.g., attractive, young, women who are sexually available to men) and make significant efforts to adhere to beauty norms (e.g., through extensive grooming, dieting, or cosmetic surgery) delivered in an supposedly benevolent manner through compliments and appreciative sexualized gazes may help men to maintain the patriarchal gender power balance in situations

when patriarchy is secure by reminding women that their value is almost entirely dependent on their appeal to men. Together, these studies suggest that benevolent objectification may actually be more insidious for women than overt derogatory objectification because it increases women's adherence to traditional gender expectations of beauty and sexuality and because its seemingly positive valence, men may deny its potential harm.

### Dismissive objectification of women who do not embody traditional gender beauty and sexuality norms under patriarchy security

In situations in which the patriarchy is perceived as secure, the same sexist evaluations that cause men to approach hyper-visible (i.e., attractive, feminine) women also underlie men's tendency to avoid and ignore women who do not fit expectations or engage in dismissive objectification. While all women's bodies are subjected to an initial evaluation, those who deviate or violate from the traditional gender beauty role—such as women who are regarded as less well-proportioned, overweight women, older women, women with disabilities, and lesbian women, or women who opt out of appearance management behaviors (e.g., women who resist the status quo by not dieting, dyeing their hair, or wearing cosmetics)—may have their bodies (and by extension themselves) rendered invisible (Sesko and Biernat, 2010; Talmon and Ginzburg, 2016) as a form of punishment, showing that those women are perceived as failing to conform to oppressive beauty standards. Despite social conventions that suggest that avoiding eye contact or ignoring people in your interactions with them is inappropriate (Goffman, 1972), men may feel no need to engage with these women because these women appear to have little utility and do not provide any affirmations of men's status in the hierarchy. While these women may not experience benevolent or derogatory objectification in the form of increased attention (e.g., gazes, commentary), men's evaluations of them as not fitting gendered expectations and resulting avoidant and dismissive behaviors suggests that men may be initially perceiving these women in a similar manner to sexually attractive women, then deeming these women useless to them.

Men's attention to hyper-visible women (i.e., attractive, feminine), focusing on their physical attributes while ignoring their internal qualities has been linked to experiencing partial ostracism (Dvir et al., 2021). However, in patriarchal safe contexts, women may be fully rejected and rendered invisible as a result of a perceptual reduction to their appearance and related evaluation that they are worthless. Women who are literally overlooked via dismissive objectification may face a double disregard—they may be ignored, with perceivers devaluing their appearance and internal attributes, because they are deemed unworthy of any attention. This lack of attention and the perception of being unimportant to men might result in a reduced sense of mattering, which has been related to destructive feelings (Flett et al., 2019). Women rendered invisible, may momentarily find themselves freed from hyper-attention to their appearance or sex appeal, but at the cost of any consideration, undermining social connection and contributing to feelings of rejection. This may be especially problematic for those who base their self-worth on their appearance (women high in self-objectification). Felt invisibility may threaten their fundamental needs (e.g., self-esteem, belonging, meaningful recognition by

others such as feeling “seen”), resulting in negative consequences such as helplessness or depression among others (Williams, 2009). Invisibility is increasingly recognized as a form of objectification and is associated with increased body surveillance as well as body shame (Talmon and Ginzburg, 2016). Such feelings of invisibility and related shame may be connected to women engaging in appearance management behaviors such as dieting, wearing costly clothes and cosmetics, or obtaining cosmetic surgery in order to better fit the beauty standard and elicit some (limited) attention. Of course, the nominal protection (i.e., inattention) offered by invisibility has the potential to be revoked at any moment if the men feel that their power or the patriarchy is threatened.

### Objectification in a patriarchy threat context

When men's status in society or men's individual power is threatened, sexual objectification may be perceived as a method for reinstating the patriarchal system and individual power (see also Bareket and Shnabel, 2020). In instances in which men feel patriarchy is under threat, men may perceive objectification as a tool to reestablish patriarchy generally, and their position of power more specifically (Bareket and Shnabel, 2020; Maass et al., 2003). Although extreme instances of sexual violence may be used to secure men's sense of patriarchy, the EPO suggests that misogynistic comments and behaviors, and in particular the sexualization of women, may be more commonly relied upon to reestablish patriarchal power dynamics by reducing the power of women who are perceived to undermine men's status (Dahl et al., 2015; Jütten, 2016). For example, in a recent study on prescriptive beauty norms, researchers revealed that when exposed to a gender role threat, sexist men demanded especially high appearance-related investment from female targets who most directly threaten the gender hierarchy—women high in power relative to women low in power (Ramati-Ziber et al., 2020). Moreover, empirical studies have shown that sexual objectification is one way of keeping women in a subordinate role, by decreasing women's performance (Gervais et al., 2011) and hindering their ability obtain positions of power (Dahl et al., 2015). For example, in a situation in which a male and a female candidate are competing for a job, men might use sexual objectification as an effective tool to undermine women's performance, giving male applicants greater opportunity to gain power (Sáez et al., 2021, see also Bartky, 1990).

Summarizing and following Figure 1, in contexts in which men feel that patriarchy may be under threat, men's objectifying evaluations of women as fitting or not fitting traditional gender roles about beauty and sexuality is hypothesized to predict men's derogative objectifying behaviors toward female targets.

### Derogatory objectification toward women when patriarchy is threatened

Existing work on men's self-reported objectification is also consistent with the notion that men sometimes derogate women in objectifying ways. For example, men who objectify women report making jokes about “ugly” women and teasing peers who have sex with supposedly unattractive women (Curran, 2004). The

EPO expands this work by articulating antecedents (i.e., patriarchy threat) that may give rise to such derogation. Specifically, the EPO suggests that while sexist men feel entitled to evaluate women based on their fit with traditional gender expectations, when experiencing a threat to the patriarchy, sexist men are expected to derogate female targets in a manner that will put women in a subordinate position regardless of their fit. Although in situations of patriarchy threat all women will experience hostile derogatory objectification (e.g., crude sexual comments), the EPO suggests that the focus of this objectification will differ based on men's perceptions of women fitting within traditional gender beauty and sexuality expectations or not. Because of the context of patriarchy threat, sexist men are expected to perceive women's attempts at meeting gender beauty and sexuality norms as problematic. On the one hand, women perceived as fitting traditional gender beauty expectations and as sexually available to men will be seen as attempting to overpower men with their sexual wiles, whereas women perceived as not fitting traditional gender beauty expectations or who are sexually unavailable on the other hand will be seen as not working hard enough to appeal to men. Importantly, this focus on female target's attributes not only highlights the strict tightrope women are expected to walk, but also illustrates the unique and diverse consequences dehumanization has for women. For example, while sexual objectification is often described as completely stripping away women's humanity, theorists (Gervais et al., 2020; Langton, 2009) and researchers (Klein et al., 2020) have found that men may engage in wishful thinking or pseudo-empathy and objectified men may grant women limited sexual agency that aligns with beliefs that women want and like to participate in their own sexual subjugation. For example, Klein et al. (2020) found that sexually objectified servers who received tips (vs. those who were paid a fixed salary) were perceived as more sexually manipulative and that this served to legitimize male patron's sexual advances toward them. Unfortunately, sexualized victims are often blamed for sexual violence (Spaccatini et al., 2019) and attributions of (limited) sexual agency make bystanders less willing to help following victimization (Pacilli et al., 2024). While there is a very limited literature on derogatory objectification (Curran, 2004), future work is necessary to better understand the manner in which this form of objectification is commonly perpetrated.

Importantly, men's feelings of patriarchy security or their evaluations of whether female targets fit with traditional gender beauty and sexuality expectations are subject to change. It is possible that information garnered about a woman or a context may alter men's initial evaluations. For instance, learning about sexual desires of a woman who was once perceived as chaste and pure could change his initial evaluation of her from a "good" woman who abides by sex roles to a woman who is attempting to use her sexual prowess against him (Bareket et al., 2018; Glick and Fiske, 1996). This newly acquired information about the female target could lead the man to perceive her as either worthless or even a potential threat. Consequently, his once benevolent objectification could turn dismissive or derogatory (e.g., sexual insults, verbal threats) over the course of an interaction. The EPO could shed light on women's lived experiences by revealing the nuances within men's evaluations of patriarchy security and women's fit with traditional gender beauty and sexuality expectations.

## Evaluative process of objectification model hypotheses

The proposed model theorizes differential sexual objectification depending on men's perceptions of patriarchy threat and female target's fit with traditional gender norms about appearance and sexuality.

1. In contexts where men perceive patriarchy as *secure*, sexist men will feel entitled to evaluate women as sexual objects to reinforce and maintain patriarchy *depending* on perceived gender beauty and sexuality norms fit. Moreover, when the patriarchy is secure, objectifying behaviors communicate that men have the power to determine who is worth their attention.
  - a. In instances in which women are perceived as worthy objects because they *fit* traditional gender roles around appearance and sexuality (e.g., attractive, feminine, young, sexually available but not promiscuous, heterosexual), men will regard these women as useful and exploitable objects and they will become hyper-visible. Objectification will be *benevolent* in nature (e.g., appearance compliments, supposedly appreciative sexualized gazing). Through these behaviors men may provide women with a sense of power over them sexually, although this power is limited in that it is based entirely on men's approval, meaning that it can be rescinded at any moment. This benevolent objectification will reinforce and maintain men's position of power by implying that men's supposed admiration of women's bodies is something inevitable and natural.
  - b. In instances in which women are perceived as worthless objects because they *violate* traditional gender roles about beauty and sexuality (e.g., women who are overweight or older; women who are sexually unavailable), men will superficially evaluate them and regard these women as useless objects and render them invisible, and actively dismiss them as possible interactant partners.
  - c. If more information is garnered from an interaction with a female target (e.g., she confronts the objectification, she reveals she is a lesbian and therefore sexually unavailable), patriarchy may then be perceived as under threat and derogatory objectification will ensue.
2. In contexts where men perceive a *threat* to patriarchy, sexist men will feel entitled to evaluate women and use *derogatory* objectification as a means to subordinate women to reaffirm their power over them. Importantly, not all men endorse sexism to the same extent; it is expected that greater endorsement of sexist ideologies will lower the threshold for threats to patriarchy that prompt derogatory objectification.
  - a. In instances in which women are perceived as *fitting* traditional gender roles (e.g., attractive women, women engaging in extensive appearance management practices), women will be objectified in a manner that suggests they are too sexual and using their sexuality to gain power over men or too appearance-focused and therefore vain or superficial.
  - b. In instances in which women are perceived as *violating* traditional gender roles around beauty and sexuality, women

- will be objectified in a manner that highlights their lack of fit with the role. For example, they may be perceived as sexual enough and are therefore “prudes” or “spinsters,” or not focused enough on appearance and have “let themselves go.”
- c. In situations of patriarchy threat, whether female targets do or do not fit traditional gender expectations, sexist attitudes lead to perceptions that objectification of women will help men regain their power. This may legitimize treatment of women as sexual objects and reliance on violence (e.g., sexual assault in which women are literally treated as an object by their perpetrator; intimate partner violence when a woman’s income approaches or is greater than a man’s income, [Simister, 2013](#)) in order to reduce powerful women back to powerless objects.

## Theoretical implications, directions for future research, and conclusion

Patriarchal societies promote sexual objectification of women by men. The EPO attempts to provide a more comprehensive understanding of sexual objectification perpetration, which has been underexplored compared to self-objectification. While objectification theory ([Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997](#)) has acted as an essential foundation to understanding women’s lived experiences and mental health risks, a specific theoretical articulation for understanding the processes involved in sexual objectification perpetration is needed. The EPO articulates a theoretical process underlying objectification perpetration and takes into consideration features of the female target, as well as contextual variables around male power. Scant research has explored why men sexually objectify women, outlining individual sexual ([Gervais et al., 2020](#); [Vaes et al., 2011](#)) and power motives ([Bareket and Shnabel, 2020](#)). Building on this literature and the original articulation of objectification theory which assumed that objectification is pervasive in patriarchal cultures, the EPO highlights the role of this patriarchal culture in which objectification occurs by exploring cultural motives underlying men’s objectification perpetration. Because of the patriarchal culture men and women are imbued in, men have an important role in evaluating women’s value as sexual objects. This, according to the EPO, reinforces and re-establishes their power.

Given that women often participate in their own objectification and self-subjugation in ways that reinforce the system ([Calogero and Jost, 2011](#)), future EPO research should also consider patriarchy-enhancing motivations of women. For example, women may objectify other women in ways that reinforce and restore patriarchy, but this may be driven by their own positions in the patriarchy and the degree to which the system promotes upward and downward social comparison (see [Vaes et al., 2011](#), for similar consideration). Similarly, although research suggests that the underlying motivation behind gay men’s objectification of women differs from that of heterosexual men ([Kozak et al., 2009](#); [Ruzzante et al., 2024](#); [Vaes et al., 2011](#)), future EPO research should explore whether gay men engage in objectifying perceptions of women that vary in terms of valence.

Moreover, the EPO illuminates how patriarchy also shapes the ways in which women experience objectification. Women are rewarded if they adjust their appearance to the cultural standard

of attractiveness, leading them to believe that their success and self-worth is dependent on their value as a sexual object ([Smolak and Murnen, 2004](#); [Zurbriggen and Roberts, 2013](#)). Although women’s sexual value is often inferred from men’s sexually objectifying behaviors, empirical research has yet to explore how men vary in their objectification of women to communicate evaluations of female targets. Because interpersonal experiences of objectification drastically shape the ways in which women internalize self-objectifying perceptions ([Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997](#)), this means there is also a gap in the literature regarding how men’s perpetration of objectification shapes women’s self-perceptions as worthy or unworthy objects. The EPO attempts to fill this critical gap in the literature by predicting which women will experience what types of objectification. While objectifying behaviors have been conceptualized as a mixture of behaviors (e.g., sexualized gazes, unwanted sexual attention, and sexualized commentary; [Kozee et al., 2007](#)), the EPO expands on this depiction by categorizing objectification depending on whether it involves benevolence, derogation, or disregard of female targets. Alongside empirical work revealing the insidious impact of appearance compliments relative to appearance criticisms ([Calogero et al., 2009](#)) and theoretical work suggesting the potentially damaging role of ignoring self-objectifying women ([Gervais et al., 2020](#)), the EPO helps provide a more comprehensive understanding of the ways in which objectification is experienced. Furthermore, the EPO expands on [Fredrickson and Roberts’s \(1997\)](#) original assertion that women’s experiences of objectification may look drastically different as a function of their identities. For example, people from different racial/ethnic, sexual, gender, age or ability identities significantly vary in the degree to which they are able to fit conventional norms of attractiveness, and sexuality. Despite this suggestion, little work has considered women’s diverse experiences; the EPO however highlights the importance of exploring objectification directed toward every woman, not just those who fit cultural standards of beauty and sexuality.

In this paper, we have used existing literature on objectification and related studies in sexual violence to provide indirect support for the EPO. However, future research is needed to directly examine the tenants of the of the EPO. We offer a few recommendations as researchers plan these studies. First, researchers should examine objectifying perceptions, evaluations, and behaviors in the same studies. Most studies focus on perception or behavior, but not both (e.g., [Bernard et al., 2012](#); [Gervais et al., 2018](#)), leaving the perceptual antecedents of objectifying behaviors unclear. Likewise, few studies have explicitly examined objectifying evaluations of women’s bodies and sexuality. Second, in these studies, we strongly urge researchers to include women who fit and do not fit cultural ideals of beauty and sexuality, including at the intersection of different identities. Finally, in studies that examine objectifying behaviors, we suggest that researchers examine the valence of the objectifying behavior. Valence is rarely specified in measures of objectifying behaviors or is assumed to be negative (e.g., [Gervais et al., 2018](#)). However, it is important to also consider benevolent objectification behaviors. One possibility is that researchers modify existing measures of women’s sexual objectification experiences, such as the Verbal Commentary on Physical Appearance Scale ([Herbozo and Thompson, 2006](#)), to assess men’s varied objectification perpetration behaviors. These scales may also require updates to assess dismissive objectification.

Indeed, in their development and validation of the Interpersonal Sexual Objectification Scale, Kozee et al. (2007) called for future research in which women are regarded as non-sexual objects and dismissed, but no validated measures of dismissive objectification currently exist (see also Talmon and Ginzburg, 2016). Of course, objectifying behaviors that women report is a useful starting point, but additional efforts (e.g., focusing on groups of men) may be required to identify objectification of women that occurs between and amongst men (e.g., in the form of “bro” or “locker room” talk).

In summary, the Evaluative Process Model of Objectification elaborates on the well-documented link between sexual objectification and instrumentalization of women (Nussbaum, 1999). The EPO suggests that men’s objectification of women plays an active role in preserving patriarchy through a process in which women are evaluated based on their fit with gendered expectations around beauty and sexuality and then objectified in a manner that either maintains or returns women to a subordinate position. The EPO extends previous objectification literature by theorizing about not only when men will objectify women, but also about what objectification looks like depending on factors of the female target and context. The EPO reveals that men’s objectification of women is more nuanced than the typical cat-calling or fat-shaming that may come to mind when thinking of objectification. Substantially, this model emphasizes that men’s objectification of women acts “not only as a way of perceiving, but as a way of maintaining dominance as well” (Bartky, 1990, p. 5).

## Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

## References

- Adams, K. E., Hill, K. E., Tyler, J. M., Foti, D., and Shah, A. S. A. (2021). Neural indicators of sexual objectification: an examination of the late positive potential (LPP), sexual objectification, and the body-inversion effect. *Soc. Sci. J.* 61, 730–740. doi: 10.1080/03623319.2020.1851013
- Altemeyer, B. (1988). *Enemies of Freedom: Understanding Right-Wing Authoritarianism*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Augustus-Horvath, C. L., and Tylka, T. L. (2009). A test and extension of objectification theory as it predicts disordered eating: does women’s age matter? *J. Couns. Psychol.* 56, 253–265. doi: 10.1037/a0014637
- Babcock, J. C., Waltz, J., Jacobson, N. S., and Gottman, J. M. (1993). Power and violence: the relation between communication patterns, power discrepancies, and domestic violence. *J. Consult. Clin. Psychol.* 61, 40–50. doi: 10.1037/0022-006X.61.1.40
- Babl, J. D. (1971). Compensatory masculine responding as a function of sex role. *J. Counsel. Clin. Psychol.* 47, 252–257. doi: 10.1037/0022-006X.47.2.252
- Bareket, O., and Fiske, S. T. (2023). A systematic review of the ambivalent sexism literature: hostile sexism protects men’s power; benevolent sexism guards traditional gender roles. *Psychol. Bull.* 149, 637–698. doi: 10.1037/bul0000400
- Bareket, O., Kahalon, R., Shnabel, N., and Glick, P. (2018). The Madonna-whore dichotomy: men who perceive women’s nurturance and sexuality as mutually exclusive endorse patriarchy and show lower relationship satisfaction. *Sex Roles* 79, 519–532. doi: 10.1007/s11199-018-0895-7
- Bareket, O., and Shnabel, N. (2020). Domination and objectification: men’s motivation for dominance over women affects their tendency to sexually objectify women. *Psychol. Women Q.* 44, 28–49. doi: 10.1177/0361684319871913
- Bargh, J. A., Raymond, P., Pryor, J. B., and Strack, F. (1995). Attractiveness of the underling: an automatic power→ sex association and its consequences for sexual harassment and aggression. *J. Pers. Soc. Psychol.* 68, 768–781. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.68.5.768
- Bartky, S. L. (1990). *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression*. New York: Routledge.
- Baumeister, R. F., and Vohs, K. D. (2004). Sexual economics: sex as female resource for social exchange in heterosexual interactions. *Person. Soc. Psychol. Rev.* 8, 339–363. doi: 10.1207/s15327957pspr0804\_2
- Bernard, P., Gervais, S. J., Allen, J., Campomizzi, S., and Klein, O. (2012). Integrating sexual objectification with object versus person recognition: the sexualized-body-inversion hypothesis. *Psychol. Sci.* 23, 469–471. doi: 10.1177/0956797611434748
- Bernard, P., Gervais, S. J., and Klein, O. (2018). Objectifying objectification: when and why people are cognitively reduced to their parts akin to objects. *Eur. Rev. Soc. Psychol.* 29, 82–121. doi: 10.1080/10463283.2018.1471949
- Bosson, J. K., Vandello, J. A., Burnaford, R. M., Weaver, J. R., and Arzu Wasti, S. (2009). Precarious manhood and displays of physical aggression. *Pers. Soc. Psychol. Bull.* 35, 623–634. doi: 10.1177/0146167208331161
- Branscombe, N. R., Ellemers, N., Spears, R., and Doosje, B. (1999). “The context and content of social identity threat,” in *Social identity: Context, commitment, content*, eds. N. Ellemers, R. Spears, and B. Boosje (Hoboken: Blackwell Science), 35–58.
- Calogero, R. M. (2004). A test of objectification theory: the effect of the male gaze on appearance concerns in college women. *Psychol. Women Q.* 28, 16–21. doi: 10.1111/j.1471-6402.2004.00118.x

## Author contributions

GS: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. AR: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. OK: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. SG: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

## Funding

The author(s) declare financial support was received for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article. Funding for this article was provided by awards to Sarah J. Gervais from the Department of Psychology, College of Arts and Sciences, and Office of Research and Economic Development at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

## Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

## Publisher’s note

All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers. Any product that may be evaluated in this article, or claim that may be made by its manufacturer, is not guaranteed or endorsed by the publisher.

- Calogero, R. M., Herbozo, S., and Thompson, J. K. (2009). Complimentary weightism: the potential costs of appearance-related commentary for women's self-objectification. *Psychol. Women Q.* 33, 120–132. doi: 10.1111/j.1471-6402.2008.01479.x
- Calogero, R. M., and Jost, J. T. (2011). Self-subjugation among women: exposure to sexist ideology, self-objectification, and the protective function of the need to avoid closure. *J. Pers. Soc. Psychol.* 100, 211–228. doi: 10.1037/a0021864
- Calogero, R. M., and Tylka, T. L. (2014). Sanctioning resistance to sexual objectification: an integrative system justification perspective. *J. Soc. Issues* 70, 763–778. doi: 10.1111/josi.12090
- Calogero, R. M., Tylka, T. L., Mensinger, J. L., Meadows, A., and Danielsdóttir, S. (2019). Recognizing the fundamental right to be fat: a weight-inclusive approach to size acceptance and healing from sizeism. *Women Ther.* 42, 22–44. doi: 10.1080/02703149.2018.1524067
- Carr, E. R., Szymanski, D. M., Taha, F., West, L. M., and Kaslow, N. J. (2014). Understanding the link between multiple oppressions and depression among African American women: the role of internalization. *Psychol. Women Q.* 38, 233–245. doi: 10.1177/0361684313499900
- Cikara, M., Eberhardt, J. L., and Fiske, S. T. (2011). From agents to objects: sexist attitudes and neural responses to sexualized targets. *J. Cogn. Neurosci.* 23, 540–551. doi: 10.1162/jocn.2010.21497
- Civile, C., and Obhi, S. S. (2016). Power, objectification, and recognition of sexualized women and men. *Psychol. Women Q.* 40, 199–212. doi: 10.1177/0361684315604820
- Cogoni, C., Carnaghi, A., and Silani, G. (2018). Reduced empathetic responses for sexually objectified women: an fMRI investigation. *Cortex* 99, 258–272. doi: 10.1016/j.cortex.2017.11.020
- Cohn, A. M., Seibert, L. A., and Zeichner, A. (2009). The role of restrictive emotionality, trait anger, and masculinity threat in men's perpetration of physical aggression. *Psychol. Men Masc.* 10, 218–224. doi: 10.1037/a0015151
- Cole, E. R. (2009). Intersectionality and research in psychology. *Am. Psychol.* 64, 170–180. doi: 10.1037/a0014564
- Connell, R. W. (1987). *Gender and Power*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Costello, T. H., Watts, A. L., Murphy, B. A., and Lilienfeld, S. O. (2020). Extending the nomological network of sexual objectification to psychopathic and allied personality traits. *Person. Disor.* 11, 237–248. doi: 10.1037/per0000377
- Craddock, N., Gentili, C., Phoenix, A., White, P., Diedrichs, P. C., and Barlow, F. K. (2023). Investigating the role of perceived ingroup and outgroup colourism on body image and wellbeing among Black, Asian, and other racialized/ethnic minority groups living in the UK. *Body Image* 46, 246–255. doi: 10.1016/j.bodyim.2023.06.010
- Crawford, M., and Popp, D. (2003). Sexual double standards: a review and methodological critique of two decades of research. *J. Sex Res.* 40, 13–26. doi: 10.1080/00224490309552163
- Curran, P. (2004). *Development of a new measure of men's objectification of women: Factor structure test retest validity*. Psychology Honors Projects, Digital Commons @ Illinois Wesleyan University. Available at: [http://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/psych\\_honproj/13](http://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/psych_honproj/13) (accessed November 7, 2024).
- Dahl, J., Vescio, T., and Weaver, K. (2015). How threats to masculinity sequentially cause public discomfort, anger, and ideological dominance over women. *Soc. Psychol.* 46, 242–254. doi: 10.1027/1864-9335/a000248
- Dardenne, B., Dumont, M., and Bollier, T. (2007). Insidious dangers of benevolent sexism: consequences for women's performance. *J. Pers. Soc. Psychol.* 93, 764–779. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.93.5.764
- Diehl, C., Rees, J., and Bohner, G. (2018). Predicting sexual harassment from hostile sexism and short-term mating orientation: relative strength of predictors depends on situational priming of power versus sex. *Viol. Against Women* 24, 123–143. doi: 10.1177/1077801216678092
- Dumont, M., Sarlet, M., and Dardenne, B. (2010). Be too kind to a woman, she'll feel incompetent: Benevolent sexism shifts self-construal and autobiographical memories toward incompetence. *Sex Roles* 62, 545–553. doi: 10.1007/s11199-008-9582-4
- Dvir, M., Kelly, J. R., Tyler, J. M., and Williams, K. D. (2021). I'm up here! Sexual objectification leads to feeling ostracized. *J. Pers. Soc. Psychol.* 121, 332–353. doi: 10.1037/pspi0000328
- Endendijk, J. J., van Baar, A. L., and Deković, M. (2020). He is a Stud, She is a Slut! A meta-analysis on the continued existence of sexual double standards. *Person. Soc. Psychol. Rev.* 24, 163–190. doi: 10.1177/1088868319891310
- Fairchild, K. (2023). Understanding street harassment as gendered violence: past, present, and future. *Sexu. Cult.* 27, 1140–1159. doi: 10.1007/s12119-022-09998-y
- Fairchild, K., and Rudman, L. A. (2008). Everyday stranger harassment and women's objectification. *Soc. Justice Res.* 21, 338–357. doi: 10.1007/s11211-008-0073-0
- Fasoli, F., Durante, F., Mari, S., Zogmaister, C., and Volpato, C. (2018). Shades of sexualization: when sexualization becomes sexual objectification. *Sex Roles* 78, 338–351. doi: 10.1007/s11199-017-0808-1
- Fetterolf, J. C., and Rudman, L. A. (2016). Exposure to sexual economics theory promotes a hostile view of heterosexual relationships. *Psychol. Women Q.* 41, 77–88. doi: 10.1177/0361684316669697
- Fischer, A. R., Bettendorf, S. K., and Wang, Y. W. (2011). Contextualizing sexual objectification. *Couns. Psychol.* 39, 127–139. doi: 10.1177/0011000010381141
- Flett, G., Khan, A., and Su, C. (2019). Mattering and psychological well-being in college and university students: review and recommendations for campus-based initiatives. *Int. J. Mental Health Addict.* 17, 667–680. doi: 10.1007/s11469-019-00073-6
- Fox, J., and Potocki, B. (2016). Lifetime video game consumption, interpersonal aggression, hostile sexism, and rape myth acceptance: a cultivation perspective. *J. Interpers. Violence* 31, 1912–1931. doi: 10.1177/0886260515570747
- Fredrickson, B. L., and Roberts, T. A. (1997). Objectification theory: toward understanding women's lived experiences and mental health risks. *Psychol. Women Q.* 21, 173–206. doi: 10.1111/j.1471-6402.1997.tb00108.x
- Gervais, S. J., Davidson, M. M., Stycyk, K., Canivez, G., and DiLillo, D. (2018). The development and psychometric properties of the Interpersonal Sexual Objectification Scale—Perpetration Version. *Psychol. Violence* 8, 546–559. doi: 10.1037/vio0000148
- Gervais, S. J., and Eagan, S. (2014). Sexual objectification: the common thread connecting myriad forms of sexual violence against women. *Am. J. Orthopsychiat.* 87, 226–232. doi: 10.1037/ort0000257
- Gervais, S. J., Holland, A. M., and Dodd, M. D. (2013). My eyes are up here: The nature of the objectifying gaze toward women. *Sex Roles* 69, 557–570. doi: 10.1007/s11199-013-0316-x
- Gervais, S. J., Sáez, G., Riemer, A. R., and Klein, O. (2020). The Social Interaction Model of Objectification: a process model of goal-based objectifying exchanges between men and women. *Br. J. Soc. Psychol.* 59, 248–283. doi: 10.1111/bjso.12339
- Gervais, S. J., Vescio, T. K., and Allen, J. (2011). When what you see is what you get: the consequences of the objectifying gaze for women and men. *Psychol. Women Q.* 35, 5–17. doi: 10.1177/0361684310386121
- Gervais, S. J., Vescio, T. K., and Allen, J. (2012). When are people interchangeable sexual objects? The effect of gender and body type on sexual fungibility. *Br. J. Soc. Psychol.* 51, 499–513. doi: 10.1111/j.2044-8309.2010.02016.x
- Glick, P., and Fiske, S. T. (1996). The ambivalent sexism inventory: differentiating hostile and benevolent sexism. *J. Pers. Soc. Psychol.* 70, 491–512. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.70.3.491
- Glick, P., and Fiske, S. T. (2001). An ambivalent alliance: hostile and benevolent sexism as complementary justifications for gender inequality. *Am. Psychol.* 56, 109–118. doi: 10.1037/0003-066X.56.2.109
- Glick, P., Larsen, S., Johnson, C., and Branstiter, H. (2005). Evaluations of sexy women in low- and high-status jobs. *Psychol. Women Q.* 29, 389–395. doi: 10.1111/j.1471-6402.2005.00238.x
- Goffman, E. (1972). *Relations in Public*. New York: Penguin.
- Gramazio, S., Cadinu, M., Pagliaro, S., and Pacilli, M. G. (2018). Sexualization of sexual harassment victims reduces bystanders' help: The mediating role of attribution of immorality and blame. *J. Interpers. Violence* 36, 6073–6097. doi: 10.1177/0886260518816326
- Gruenfeld, D. H., Inesi, M. E., Magee, J. C., and Galinsky, A. D. (2008). Power and the objectification of social targets. *J. Pers. Soc. Psychol.* 95, 111–127. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.95.1.111
- Guttentag, M., and Secord, P. F. (1983). *Too Many Women: The Sex Ratio Question*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Harsey, S. J., and Zurbriggen, E. L. (2020). Men and women's self-objectification, objectification of women, and sexist beliefs. *Self Identity* 20, 861–868. doi: 10.1080/15298868.2020.1784263
- Heflick, N. A., and Goldenberg, J. L. (2009). Objectifying sarah palin: evidence that objectification causes women to be perceived as less competent and less fully human. *J. Exp. Soc. Psychol.* 45, 598–601. doi: 10.1016/j.jesp.2009.02.008
- Heflick, N. A., Goldenberg, J. L., Cooper, D. P., and Puvia, E. (2011). From women to objects: appearance focus, target warmth, morality and competence. *J. Exp. Soc. Psychol.* 47, 572–581. doi: 10.1016/j.jesp.2010.12.020
- Herbozo, S., and Thompson, J. K. (2006). Appearance-related commentary, body image, and self-esteem: does the distress associated with the commentary matter? *Body Image* 3, 255–262. doi: 10.1016/j.bodyim.2006.04.001
- Hill, M. S., and Fischer, A. R. (2008). Examining objectification theory: lesbian and heterosexual women's experiences with sexual- and self-objectification. *Couns. Psychol.* 36, 745–777. doi: 10.1177/0011000007301669
- Holland, E., and Haslam, N. (2013). Worth the weight: the objectification of overweight versus thin targets. *Psychol. Women Q.* 37, 462–468. doi: 10.1177/0361684312474800
- Holland, E., and Haslam, N. (2016). Cute little things: the objectification of prepubescent girls. *Psychol. Women Q.* 40, 108–119. doi: 10.1177/0361684315602887
- Holland, E., Koval, P., Stratemeyer, M., Thomson, F., and Haslam, N. (2017). Sexual objectification in women's daily lives: a smartphone ecological momentary assessment study. *Br. J. Soc. Psychol.* 56, 314–333. doi: 10.1111/bjso.12152

- Hopkins-Doyle, A., Sutton, R. M., Douglas, K. M., and Calogero, R. M. (2019). Flattering to deceive: why people misunderstand benevolent sexism. *J. Pers. Soc. Psychol.* 116, 167–192. doi: 10.1037/pspa0000135
- Jost, J. T., and Kay, A. C. (2005). Exposure to benevolent sexism and complementary gender stereotypes: consequences for specific and diffuse forms of system justification. *J. Pers. Soc. Psychol.* 88, 498–509. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.88.3.498
- Jütten, T. (2016). Sexual objectification. *Ethics* 127, 27–49. doi: 10.1086/687331
- Kahalon, R., Bareket, O., Vial, A. C., Sassenhagen, N., Becker, J. C., and Shnabel, N. (2019). The Madonna-whore dichotomy is associated with patriarchy endorsement: Evidence from Israel, the United States, and Germany. *Psychol. Women Q.* 43, 348–367. doi: 10.1177/0361684319843298
- Keel, C., Stewart, R., and Melberg, J. (2024). Operationalizing street harassment using survey instruments: a systematic review of measuring harassment in public spaces using surveys. *Trauma Viol. Abuse* 25, 2609–2621. doi: 10.1177/15248380231219258
- Kellie, D. J., Blake, K. R., and Brooks, R. C. (2019). What drives female objectification? An investigation of appearance-based interpersonal perceptions and the objectification of women. *PLoS ONE* 14:e0221388. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0221388
- Klein, O., Arnal, C., Eagan, S., Bernard, P., and Gervais, S. J. (2020). Does tipping facilitate sexual objectification? The effect of tips on sexual harassment of bar and restaurant servers. *Equal. Diver. Inclusion* 40, 448–460. doi: 10.1108/EDI-04-2019-0127
- Kozak, M., Frankenhauser, H., and Roberts, T.-A. (2009). Objects of desire: objectification as a function of male sexual orientation. *Psychol. Men Masc.* 10, 225–230. doi: 10.1037/a0016257
- Kozee, H. B., Tylka, T. L., Augustus-Horvath, C. L., and Denchik, A. (2007). Development and psychometric evaluation of the interpersonal sexual objectification scale. *Psychol. Women Q.* 31, 176–189. doi: 10.1111/j.1471-6402.2007.00351.x
- LaCroix, J. M., Burrows, C. N., and Blanton, H. (2018). Effects of immersive, sexually objectifying, and violent video games on hostile sexism in males. *Commun. Res. Rep.* 35, 413–423. doi: 10.1080/08824096.2018.1525351
- Langton, R. (2009). *Sexual Solipsism: Philosophical Essays on Pornography and Objectification*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. doi: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199247066.001.0001
- Lewis, J. A., and Neville, H. A. (2015). Construction and initial validation of the gendered racial microaggressions scale for black women. *J. Couns. Psychol.* 62, 289–302. doi: 10.1037/cou0000062
- Lindloff, M. R., Meadows, A., and Calogero, R. M. (2024). Living while fat: development and validation of the fat microaggressions scale. *J. Pers. Soc. Psychol.* 127, 335–362. doi: 10.1037/pspi0000450
- Liss, M., Erchull, M. J., and Ramsey, L. R. (2011). Empowering or oppressing? Development and exploration of the enjoyment of sexualization scale. *Person. Soc. Psychol. Bull.* 37, 55–68. doi: 10.1177/0146167210386119
- Loughnan, S., Haslam, N., Murnane, T., Vaes, J., Reynolds, C., and Suitner, C. (2010). Objectification leads to depersonalization: the denial of mind and moral concern to objectified others. *Eur. J. Soc. Psychol.* 40, 709–717. doi: 10.1002/ejsp.755
- Loughnan, S., Pina, A., Vasquez, E. A., and Puvia, E. (2013). Sexual objectification increases rape victim blame and decreases perceived suffering. *Psychol. Women Q.* 37, 455–461. doi: 10.1177/0361684313485718
- Maass, A., Cadinu, M., Guarnieri, G., and Grasselli, A. (2003). Sexual harassment under social identity threat: the computer harassment paradigm. *J. Pers. Soc. Psychol.* 85, 853–870. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.85.5.853
- MacKinnon, C. A. (1987). *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. doi: 10.2307/2070528
- Mahalik, J. R., Morray, E. B., Coonerty-Femiano, A., Ludlow, L. H., Slattery, S. M., and Smiler, A. (2005). Development of the conformity to feminine norms inventory. *Sex Roles* 52, 417–435. doi: 10.1007/s11199-005-3709-7
- Malamuth, N. M., Linz, D., Heavey, C. L., Barnes, G., and Acker, M. (1995). Using the confluence model of sexual aggression to predict men's conflict with women: a 10-year follow-up study. *J. Pers. Soc. Psychol.* 69, 353. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.69.2.353
- Manne, K. (2017). *Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. doi: 10.1093/oso/9780190604981.001.0001
- Martin, W. (2015). *Poor little rich women*. The New York Times.
- Moffitt, L. B., and Szymanski, D. M. (2011). Experiencing sexually objectifying environments: a qualitative study. *Couns. Psychol.* 39, 67–106. doi: 10.1177/0011000010364551
- Morris, K. L., Goldenberg, J., and Boyd, P. (2018). Women as animals, women as objects: evidence for two forms of objectification. *Pers. Soc. Psychol. Bull.* 44, 1302–1314. doi: 10.1177/0146167218765739
- Morse, T. (2008). *The Sexual Objectification Scale: Continued Development and Psychometric Evaluation*. Ann Arbor, MI: ProQuest Information and Learning.
- Murnen, S. K. (2015). A social constructivist approach to understanding the relationship between masculinity and sexual aggression. *Psychol. Men Masc.* 16, 370–373. doi: 10.1037/a0039693
- Nussbaum, M. C. (1995). Objectification. *Philos. Public Affairs* 24, 249–291. doi: 10.1111/j.1088-4963.1995.tb00032.x
- Nussbaum, M. C. (1999). *Sex and Social Justice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. doi: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195112108.001.0001
- O'Neil, J. M. (2008). Summarizing 25 years of research on men's gender role conflict using the Gender Role Conflict Scale: new research paradigms and clinical implications. *Couns. Psychol.* 36, 358–445. doi: 10.1177/0011000008317057
- Orehek, E., and Weaverling, C. G. (2017). On the nature of objectification: implications of considering people as means to goals. *Perspect. Psychol. Sci.* 12, 719–730. doi: 10.1177/1745691617691138
- Pacilli, M. G., Pagliaro, S., Giovannelli, I., Spaccatini, F., Berlin, E., and Rollero, C. (2024). From non-traditional sexual behavior to non-legitimate victims: moral virtue, victim blame, and helping intentions toward a woman victim of image-based sexual abuse. *Arch. Sexual Behav.* 53, 4079–4088. doi: 10.1007/s10508-024-02970-x
- Pacilli, M. G., Pagliaro, S., Loughnan, S., Gramazio, S., Spaccatini, F., and Baldry, A. C. (2017). Sexualization reduces helping intentions towards female victims of intimate partner violence through mediation of moral patiency. *Br. J. Soc. Psychol.* 56, 293–313. doi: 10.1111/bjso.12169
- Pacilli, M. G., Spaccatini, F., Barresi, C., and Tomasetto, C. (2019). Less human and help-worthy: sexualization affects children's perceptions of an intentions toward bullied peers. *Int. J. Behav. Dev.* 43, 481–491. doi: 10.1177/0165025419873040
- Parent, M. C., and Moradi, B. (2011). An abbreviated tool for assessing feminine norm conformity: psychometric properties of the Conformity to Feminine Norms Inventory—45. *Psychol. Assess.* 23, 958–969. doi: 10.1037/a0024082
- Pecini, C., Guizzo, F., Bonache, H., Borges-Castells, N., Morera, M. D., and Vaes, J. (2023). Sexual objectification: advancements and avenues for future research. *Curr. Opin. Behav. Sci.* 50:101261. doi: 10.1016/j.cobeha.2023.101261
- Pharr, S. (1988). *Homophobia: A Weapon of Sexism*. Little Rock, AR: Chardon Press.
- Porter, J. (2013). *What happens when you abolish tipping?* Available at: <https://slate.com/human-interest/2013/08/tipless-restaurants-the-linkerys-owner-explains-why-abolishing-tipping-made-service-better.html> (accessed November 7, 2024).
- Pratto, F., Sidanius, J., Stallworth, L. M., and Malle, B. F. (1994). Social dominance orientation: a personality variable predicting social and political attitudes. *J. Pers. Soc. Psychol.* 67, 741–763. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.67.4.741
- Raj, A., Rao, N., Patel, P., and Kearn, H. (2024). *#MeToo 2024: A National Study of Sexual Harassment and Assault in the United States*. Newcomb Institute, Tulane University. Available at: <https://newcomb.tulane.edu/content/metoo-research> (accessed November 7, 2024).
- Ramati-Ziber, L., Shnabel, N., and Glick, P. (2020). The beauty myth: prescriptive beauty norms for women reflect hierarchy-enhancing motivations leading to discriminatory employment practices. *J. Pers. Soc. Psychol.* 119, 317–343. doi: 10.1037/pspi000209
- Richardson-Self, L. (2018). Woman-Hating: on misogyny, sexism, and hate speech. *Hypatia* 33, 256–272. doi: 10.1111/hypa.12398
- Riemer, A. R., Allen, J., Gullickson, M., and Gervais, S. J. (2020). “You Can Catch More Flies with Honey than Vinegar”: objectification valence interacts with women's enjoyment of sexualization to influence social perceptions. *Sex Roles* 83, 1–15. doi: 10.1007/s11199-020-01143-z
- Riemer, A. R., Chaudoir, S. R., and Earnshaw, V. (2014). What looks like sexism and why? The effect of comment type and perpetrator type on women's perceptions of sexism. *J. General Psychol.* 141, 263–279. doi: 10.1080/00221309.2014.907769
- Riemer, A. R., Haikalis, M., Franz, M. R., Dodd, M. D., DiLillo, D., and Gervais, S. J. (2018). Beauty is in the eye of the beer holder: an initial investigation of the effects of alcohol, attractiveness, warmth, and competence on the objectifying gaze in men. *Sex Roles* 79, 449–463. doi: 10.1007/s11199-017-0876-2
- Roberts, T. A., Calogero, R. M., and Gervais, S. J. (2018). “Objectification theory: Continuing contributions to feminist psychology,” in *APA handbook in psychology. APA handbook of the psychology of women: History, theory, and battlegrounds*, eds. C. B. Travis, J. W. White, A. Rutherford, W. S. Williams, S. L. Cook, and K. F. Wyche (Washington: American Psychological Association), 249–271. doi: 10.1037/000059-013
- Rudman, L. A., and Borgida, E. (1995). The afterglow of construct accessibility: the behavioral consequences of priming men to view women as sexual objects. *J. Exp. Soc. Psychol.* 31, 493–517. doi: 10.1006/jesp.1995.1022
- Ruzzante, D., Cogoni, C., and Vaes, J. (2024). Female sexual objectification among gay men: neural and cultural insights. *J. Men's Stud.* 2024:10608265241281721. doi: 10.1177/10608265241281721
- Sáez, G., Riemer, A. R., Valor-Segura, I., and Exposito, F. (2021). “I'll stop talking now”: decreased interaction length in mixed-sex interpersonal interactions as response to objectification. *J. Soc. Personal Relation.* 38, 180–188. doi: 10.1177/0265407520958474
- Salmen, A., and Dhont, K. (2021). Hostile and benevolent sexism: the differential roles of human supremacy beliefs, women's connection to nature,

- and the dehumanization of women. *Group Proc. Inter. Relat.* 24, 1053–1076. doi: 10.1177/1368430220920713
- Schur, E. M. (1983). *Labeling Women Deviant: Gender, Stigma, and Social Control*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Seabrook, R. C., Ward, M., and Giaccardi, S. (2018). Why is fraternity membership associated with sexual assault? Exploring the roles of conformity to masculine norms, pressure to uphold masculinity, and objectification of women. *Psychol. Men Mascul.* 19, 3–13. doi: 10.1037/men0000076
- Sesko, A. K., and Biernat, M. (2010). Prototypes of race and gender: the invisibility of Black women. *J. Exp. Soc. Psychol.* 46, 356–360. doi: 10.1016/j.jesp.2009.10.016
- Sheperd, L. (2019). Responding to sexual objectification: the role of emotions in influencing willingness to undertake different types of action. *Sex Roles* 80, 25–40. doi: 10.1007/s11199-018-0912-x
- Sherman, A. M., Tran, S., and Sy, J. (2024). Objectification and body esteem: age group patterns in women's psychological functioning. *Aging Mental Health* 28, 706–716. doi: 10.1080/13607863.2023.2273338
- Siebler, F., Sabelus, S., and Bohner, G. (2008). A refined computer harassment paradigm: validation, and test of hypotheses about target characteristics. *Psychol. Women Q.* 32, 22–35. doi: 10.1111/j.1471-6402.2007.00404.x
- Simister, J. (2013). Is men's share of housework reduced by gender deviance neutralization? Evidence from seven countries. *J. Compar. Family Stud.* 44, 311–325. doi: 10.3138/jcfs.44.3.311
- Smolak, L., and Murnen, S. K. (2004). "A feminist approach to eating disorders," in *Handbook of eating disorders and obesity*, ed. J. K. Thompson (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.), 590–605.
- Spaccatini, F., Pacilli, M. G., Giovannelli, I., Roccatò, M., and Penone, G. (2019). Sexualized victims of stranger harassment and victim blaming: the moderating role of right-wing authoritarianism. *Sexual. Cult.* 23, 811–825. doi: 10.1007/s12119-019-09592-9
- Spaccatini, F., Pacilli, M. G., Pagliaro, S., and Giovannelli, I. (2023). Victim blaming 2.0: blaming sexualized victims of online harassment lowers bystanders' helping intentions. *Curr. Psychol.* 42, 19054–19064. doi: 10.1007/s12144-022-02884-8
- Stanaland, A., Gaither, S., and Gassman-Pines, A. (2023). When is masculinity "fragile"? An expectancy-discrepancy-threat model of masculine identity. *Person. Soc. Psychol. Rev.* 27, 359–377. doi: 10.1177/10888683221141176
- Sultana, A. (2010). Patriarchy and women's subordination: a theoretical analysis. *Arts Fac. J.* 4, 1–18. doi: 10.3329/afj.v4i0.12929
- Szymanski, D. M., and Mikorski, R. (2016). Sexually objectifying restaurants and waitresses' burnout and intentions to leave: the roles of power and support. *Sex Roles* 75, 328–338. doi: 10.1007/s11199-016-0621-2
- Talmon, A., and Ginzburg, K. (2016). The nullifying experience of self-objectification: the development and psychometric evaluation of the Self-Objectification Scale. *Child Abuse Neglect* 60, 46–57. doi: 10.1016/j.chiabu.2016.09.007
- Tichenor, V. (2005). Maintaining men's dominance: negotiating identity and power when she earns more. *Sex Roles* 53, 191–205. doi: 10.1007/s11199-005-5678-2
- Vaes, J., Paladino, P., and Puvia, E. (2011). Are sexualized women complete human beings? Why men and women dehumanize sexually objectified women. *Eur. J. Soc. Psychol.* 41, 774–785. doi: 10.1002/ejsp.824
- Vandello, J. A., Bosson, J. K., Cohen, D., Burnaford, R. M., and Weaver, J. R. (2008). Precarious manhood. *J. Pers. Soc. Psychol.* 95, 1325–1339. doi: 10.1037/a0012453
- Walby, S. (1989). Theorising patriarchy. *Sociology* 23, 213–234. doi: 10.1177/0038038589023002004
- Watson, L. B., Robinson, D., Dispenza, F., and Nazari, N. (2012). African American women's sexual objectification experiences: a qualitative study. *Psychol. Women Q.* 36, 458–475. doi: 10.1177/0361684312454724
- Westcott, M. (1986). *The Feminist Legacy of Karen Horney*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 66.
- Wilkinson, W. W. (2008). Threatening the patriarchy: testing an explanatory paradigm of anti-lesbian attitudes. *Sex Roles* 59, 512–520. doi: 10.1007/s11199-008-9432-4
- Willer, R., Rogalin, C. L., Conlon, B., and Wojnowicz, M. T. (2013). Overdoing gender: a test of the masculine overcompensation thesis. *Am. J. Sociol.* 118, 980–1022. doi: 10.1086/668417
- Williams, K. D. (2009). "Ostracism: a temporal need-threat model," in *Advances in experimental social psychology*, ed. M. P. Zanna (New York: Elsevier Academic Press), 275–314. doi: 10.1016/S0065-2601(08)00406-1
- Williams, M. J., Gruenfeld, D. H., and Guillory, L. E. (2017). Sexual aggression when power is new: Effects of acute high power on chronically low-power individuals. *J. Pers. Soc. Psychol.* 112, 201–223. doi: 10.1037/pspi0000068
- Xiao, L., Li, B., Zheng, L., and Wang, F. (2019). The relationship between social power and sexual objectification: behavioral and ERP data. *Front. Psychol.* 10:57. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00057
- Zurbriggen, E. L., and Roberts, T. A. E. (2013). *The Sexualization of Girls and Girlhood: Causes, Consequences, and Resistance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.