



Kent Academic Repository

Vasquez, Eduardo A., Osinnowo, Kolawole, Pina, Afroditi, Ball, Louisa and Bell, Cheyra (2016) *The sexual objectification of girls and aggression towards them in gang and non-gang affiliated youth*. *Psychology, Crime, and Law*, 23 (5). pp. 459-471. ISSN 1068-316X.

Downloaded from

<https://kar.kent.ac.uk/58966/> The University of Kent's Academic Repository KAR

The version of record is available from

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1068316X.2016.1269902>

This document version

Author's Accepted Manuscript

DOI for this version

Licence for this version

UNSPECIFIED

Additional information

Versions of research works

Versions of Record

If this version is the version of record, it is the same as the published version available on the publisher's web site. Cite as the published version.

Author Accepted Manuscripts

If this document is identified as the Author Accepted Manuscript it is the version after peer review but before type setting, copy editing or publisher branding. Cite as Surname, Initial. (Year) 'Title of article'. To be published in *Title of Journal*, Volume and issue numbers [peer-reviewed accepted version]. Available at: DOI or URL (Accessed: date).

Enquiries

If you have questions about this document contact ResearchSupport@kent.ac.uk. Please include the URL of the record in KAR. If you believe that your, or a third party's rights have been compromised through this document please see our [Take Down policy](https://www.kent.ac.uk/guides/kar-the-kent-academic-repository#policies) (available from <https://www.kent.ac.uk/guides/kar-the-kent-academic-repository#policies>).

Running head: OBJECTIFICATION AND AGGRESSION IN YOUTH

The sexual objectification of girls and aggression towards them in
gang and non-gang affiliated youth

Eduardo A. Vasquez¹

Kolawole Osinnowo¹

Afroditi Pina¹

Louisa Ball²

Cheyra Bell¹

¹University of Kent

²University College London

Abstract

Sexual objectification is related to various negative attitudes and outcomes, including rape proclivity and reduced moral concern for the objectified, which suggests that objectification has implications for aggression. Our study examined the relationship between objectification and general aggressive behaviour in adolescents, including gang-affiliated youth. We hypothesized that 1) objectification would correlate with aggression towards girls, 2) gang affiliation would correlate with objectification and aggression towards girls, and 3) objectification and gang affiliation would interact such that strongly affiliated participants who objectified girls would be most aggressive towards them. We also hypothesized that sexual objectification would be a significant predictor of aggression above and beyond other factors, such as trait aggression. As predicted, objectification correlated with aggression towards girls and with gang affiliation, which also correlated with aggression. In addition, objectification predicted aggression towards girls, after controlling for other relevant factors. Further, we found an objectification x gang affiliation interaction, which differed from our original predictions. Among participants low in gang affiliation, objectification of girls predicted levels of aggression towards them. Among those high in gang affiliation, however, objectification did not predict aggression. We discussed the implications of our findings for general aggression.

Keywords: Sexual objectification; aggression; gang affiliation; juvenile aggression; sexual objectification in adolescents.

The Sexual Objectification of Girls and Aggression Towards Them in Gang and Non-Gang Affiliated Youth

Sexual objectification refers to the perception of an individual as being primarily for the purpose of fulfilling sexual desires, with their body being their main attribute (see Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997). When a woman is sexually objectified, the observer focuses on sexualized body parts (Bernard, Gervais, Allen, Campomizzi & Klein 2012), and other non-physical attributes (e.g., cognitive/mental capacity, personality traits) are not fully recognized or acknowledged, leading her to be perceived as less than a complete person (Nussbaum, 1995). The process of sexual objectification has significant implications for facilitating aggression towards the objectified (e.g., a person perceived as something useful primarily for physical gratification, being a tool for one's own purposes); yet, no research has assessed the direct link between sexual objectification and general aggression, particularly in youth. Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between sexual objectification of girls and aggression towards them in a juvenile population. In addition, the study aimed to examine this relationship in gang-affiliated youth and compare them to non-affiliated juveniles because the former are likely to be at higher risk for objectifying girls. We decided to study the relevant factors in this young population because we were interested in assessing whether the link between objectification and aggression would already be manifested at this relatively early age (12-16 years), and because gang-affiliation tends to be more likely in this age group. In the next sections, we discuss why objectification was expected to be related to aggression.

Having a sexual interest in another person is, of course, a normal aspect of being human and can have a variety of positive outcomes, such as successful relationships, companionship, and reproduction. The perception of individuals as *mere* objects for sexual gratification, however, is related to a variety of detrimental outcomes that may influence the

expression of aggression and violence towards them. In the next sections, we discuss why sexual objectification is an important and impactful factor among adolescents, and subsequently, why it may be implicated in more general types of aggression and violence, besides sexual aggression.

Objectification in youth

Adolescence is clearly an important period for the development of human sexuality. At this stage, the human body experiences a variety of processes involved in reproductive maturity, which leads to a number of physical and social changes related to sexual issues, including being attracted to and attracting others. Thus, adolescents come to develop a sense of themselves and others as sexual beings (Collins & Sroufe, 1999). Sexual objectification can play a significant role in the development of attitudes towards and perceptions of the self and others among youth and has powerful implications for interpersonal and inter-gender relations and behaviour (for a review, see Zurbriggen et al., 2007). This is because adolescents are regularly exposed to significant levels of objectifying messages and images from a range of sources that include television (Grauerholz & King, 1997; Ward 1995), music videos (Arnett, 2002; Ward & Rivadeneyra, 2002), sports (Schultz, 2005), and relationships (Brown, 2003). Essentially, these objectifying messages suggest, either explicitly and/or implicitly, that the main characteristic of females to focus on should be the body rather than non-physical attributes, such as personality or skills. In addition, sexual objectification may be particularly impactful among adolescent because they typically lack the cognitive development, experience, and maturity to understand and act on healthy aspects of sexuality and counteract the effects of objectifying messages. As a result, girls (and women) may be perceived as not fully possessing human characteristics related to moral rights, mental capabilities, and personality.

The emphasis on the sexuality and physical attributes of girls, which research shows is widespread (Zurbriggen et al., 2007), can lead to a number of detrimental outcomes for them, including treating themselves as sexual objects (see Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997), experiencing sexual harassment (Lindberg, Grabe, & Hyde, 2007), sexual exploitation (Estes & Weiner, 2001), and being depicted in negative sexual manners (e.g., being called promiscuous) as a form of retaliation (Brown, 2003). Thus, sexual objectification of girls is related to negative attitudes and behaviour towards them, including sexual aggression. In the next sections, we discuss the link between objectification and hostile and sexually aggressive tendencies towards the objectified, primarily in adult participants and targets, and why this link suggests sexual objectification likely impacts more general types of aggression.

Objectification and anti-social tendencies

Sexually objectifying others is related to a range of detrimental outcomes. One set of relevant outcomes, for instance, is that among adult, objectified females are perceived as being less competent, lacking fully functioning minds and mental capabilities, as well as being less fully human (Heflick & Goldenberg 2009; Helfick, Goldenberg, Cooper & Puvia, 2011; Loughnan, et al., 2010; Nussbaum, 1999). In other words, the objectification of individuals dehumanizes them. This, in turn, reduces concern about their moral rights (Loughnan et al., 2010; Loughnan, Pina, Vasquez, & Puvia, 2013). The dehumanizing effect of objectification can be expected to reduce the inhibition to aggress because the objectified would be seen as underserving of moral concern. In addition, it has been shown that people tend to feel comfortable with aggressing and are more willing to aggress against individuals and groups they dehumanize (see Haslam, 2006; Waytz, Gray, Epley, & Wegner, 2010). This fits with important theories of aggression. The General Aggression Model (GAM; Anderson & Bushman, 2002), for instance, proposes that, in a social context with the potential for developing into an aggressive confrontation, aggression is the result of the interaction

between personal characteristics (e.g., an involved person has a short temper) and situational factors (e.g., an involved person is insulting the other). The dehumanising effect of objectifying a potential target of aggression is a situational factor that serves to reduce the inhibition against aggressing, particularly if the aggressor is highly motivated to act aggressively. As we argue in the next sections, objectification may also be a situational factor that primes or activates aggressive impulse by inducing the perception that an objectified individual is a threat or should be disliked. Thus, objectification may promote a hostile attitude that facilitates aggression.

A tendency to objectify women is also related to attitudes and behavioural tendencies linked to sexual aggression. Among males, objectification is positively related to hostile sexism, likelihood to sexually harass, and rape proclivity (Cikara, Eberhardt, & Fiske, 2011; Rudman & Mescher, 2012), which, strongly suggests possession of hostile attitudes towards women. Rudman & Mescher (2012), for instance, found that men who associate women more with animalistic than human terms, and men who associate women with tools and objects, both of which are related to objectification, expressed greater *willingness* to sexually harass or assault women. Although the outcome variable did not involve actual aggression (or sexually aggressive behaviour), the study suggests that objectification may increase the risk of engaging in more general types of aggressive behaviour, including violence, because it is linked to negative attitudes that promote hostility and aggressive tendencies. Other research has found a link between engaging in sexual objectification by evaluating other people's bodies and self-reported sexual violence (Gervais, DiLillo, & McChargue, 2014). In addition, sexual objectification can augment the perception of a sexually objectified rape victim as being responsible for being sexually attacked (Loughnan et al., 2013). Furthermore, sexual objectification can be used to create a type of stigma on a person in order to devalue them (Brown, 2003). Thus, objectification may be related not just to sexual aggression, but also to

general aggression and violence towards objectified individuals because it promotes hostility and decreased moral concern for them, which motivate aggressive tendencies and reduce inhibitions against aggressing, respectively. We point out, however, that some research suggests that the link between focusing on a person's body, which is generally expected to objectify them, and aggression towards them is more complex than many realise, such that a body focus may lead to more concern for a person's body and to less aggression (Gray, Knobe, Sheskin, Bloom, & Barrett, 2011). Gray et al. (2011), for instance, found that focusing on a male confederate's body decreased the perception that he possessed moral responsibility/agency (less capable of engaging in morality), but increased the perception that he could experience more emotions and harm. In addition, focusing on the confederate's body, as opposed to his mind, led to participants administering fewer ostensible electric shocks. Despite the suggestion that a body focus may actually reduce the levels of painful stimuli targeted at individuals, we nevertheless maintained the expectation that sexual objectification would be linked to aggression, given our previous discussion of some of the research findings on the relationship between objectification and hostility and sexual aggression.

It is important to point out, however, that objectification is not expected to be linked to aggression in males alone. Due to the cultural milieu of westernized societies, people are often objectified and viewed as commodities, and mainstream media (e.g. television, magazines, music videos) often depict images of women that are sexually objectifying or eroticizing sexual violence (Calogero, Tantleff-Dunn & Thompson, 2011). As a result, women also objectify other women and have negative attitudes and perceptions towards those they objectify (Heflick and Goldenberg, 2009). These negative attitudes include hostility, which can be expected to facilitate or motivate aggression. As a result, objectifying another person may create a stigma or a perception of threat that primes others to act aggressively.

Thus, we expected objectification to be correlated with aggression for both male and female participants. It is important to point out that the psychological processes that relate objectification and aggression may be different for males and females. However, for the purposes of our exploratory study, we propose that objectification will still be directly related to aggression towards objectified females for both male and female participants.

In short, the process of objectifying others has implications for aggression because, through its mechanisms of reducing a person to an object that can be manipulated and controlled (Calogero et al., 2011), it is likely to justify and disinhibit aggressive behaviour targeted at the objectified. Thus, we predicted that in a teenage sample, objectification of females would predict aggression towards them. In the next section, we discuss why we expected gang affiliation to be a significant predictor of sexual objectification and expected their interaction to predict aggression towards girls in a juvenile sample.

Gang affiliation and objectification

Gang members and youth who are strongly affiliated with them are likely to find themselves in social contexts that facilitate, and even demand, the objectification of girls and women. Fleisher and Krienert (2004), for instance, found that female gang members were often expected to engage in sexual acts with male gang members. Failure to comply could lead to violence as punishment. Miller and Decker (2001) also found that female gang members are at a higher risk than non-gang members of becoming victims of sexual exploitation and aggression, as well as physical violence. Other researchers (e.g., Totten, 2000) have found that male gang members often believe that girls are only good for domestic work and sex. Indeed, some researchers theorize that male gang members often join gangs because they believe that it will help them obtain more sexual partners (Palmer & Tilley, 1995). This expectation that gang membership helps to obtain sexual gratification is likely to

induce and facilitate the perception that girls and women function primarily for providing physical pleasure, which can influence behaviour towards girls and women. A qualitative study in the UK with gang-affiliated youth (Beckett et al., 2013), for instance, found that girls were both harmed and blamed by young men and other young women for their sexual victimisation. Young people in their sample reported that sexual violence was normal and expected in gang contexts and as a 16 year old male put it: “boys are predators, girls are prey, innit?” (Beckett et al., 2013, p.1). As a result, we expected a correlation between gang affiliation and objectification of girls. We also expected gang affiliation and objectification to interact, such that high levels of both gang affiliation and objectification would be the most predictive of aggression towards girls among participants.

Thus, to summarize, we developed three main hypotheses. First, we predicted that sexual objectification would be correlated with aggression towards girls. Second, we predicted that gang affiliation would be correlated with objectification, and that affiliation and objectification would interact to predict aggression. Third, we predicted that objectification would remain a significant predictor of aggression towards girls, after controlling for other factors, such as trait aggression, gender, and gang affiliation.

Method

Participants

The sample consisted of 273 participants (142 males, 125 females, 6 missing gender information) from a secondary school in London. Their ages ranged from 12 to 16 years ($M = 13.20$, $SD = 1.41$). The school is located in an area experiencing problems with gangs and delinquency.

Measures

Aggression. Aggression towards girls was assessed by asking participants to rate their agreement with the following two statements, using a 5-point scale that ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree): “I act aggressive towards girls in general” and “I have acted aggressively towards a girl before.”

Sexual objectification. Our measure of sexual objectification consisted of the following three items: “Girls are only good for their body;” “It’s ok to treat girls as objects;” “Girls are only used for pleasure.” The items capture theorised aspects of sexual objectification related to the perception of girls as objects and sources of sexual stimulation (see Cikara et al. 2010). Participants were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed with those three statements using a 5-point scale that ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Gang affiliation. Our measure of gang affiliation was used to assess the degree to which participants were involved in gangs and/or involved with gang members. The measure consisted of the following three items: “I have friends that are members of a gang”; “I spend time with people who belong in a gang”; “I consider myself as belonging to a gang.” Participants indicated their agreement with those statements using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (disagree) to 5 (agree). This measure has been successfully employed in previous research (see Vasquez, Osman, & Wood, 2012).

Trait aggression. We employed the Physical Aggression sub-scale of the Aggression Questionnaire (Buss & Perry, 1992) to assess the tendency to act aggressively as a control factor. The sub-scale included items, such as “If somebody hits me I hit back”. All items were rated on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*Extremely unlike me*) to 7 (*Extremely like me*).

Procedure

Participants were treated in accordance with the BPS Code of Conduct, Ethical Principles and Guidelines. The authors obtained ethical approval from their University Research Ethics Board prior to conducting the study. Two weeks prior to data collection, a letter describing the study to parents and asking for their consent was sent by the authors. The study was conducted with the consent of participants' parents and permission from the Head teacher as the gatekeeper.

The study took place in an assembly hall in which each student had their own desk to ensure they completed the questionnaires individually. Before conducting the study, one of the researchers read aloud an information sheet to ensure that participants were aware of the aims of the study, that their participation was voluntary and confidential, and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty. They were also given this information in writing for them to read. Participants were then asked to read the information sheet which gave further details about the study, participant etiquette, as well as information about consent, confidentiality, debriefing and results reporting. Participants were told that the purpose of the study was to assess peer interactions and perceptions of girls.

After participants had agreed to participate, they were given a hard copy of the questionnaire containing the measures. After completing the questionnaire, participants were debriefed and the researcher ensured that each participant felt comfortable with their involvement in the study before departing the assembly hall.

Results

The data were analyzed using SPSS and a $p < .05$ significance level. We averaged the items in the following four factors to create composites, all with satisfactory alpha coefficients: objectification of girls, gang affiliation, trait physical aggression, and aggression towards girls

(respectively). Alpha coefficients, means, and standard deviations for these factors, as well as for age and gender (where applicable) are presented in Table 1.

A correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between aggression towards girls, objectification, trait physical aggression, gang affiliation, watching television, playing violent video games, age, and gender (see Table 1). As predicted, aggression towards girls was positively correlated with objectification ($r = .274, p < .001$) and with gang affiliation ($r = .207, p = .001$). It was also positively related to trait aggression ($r = .228, p < .001$), watching television ($r = .145, p = .016$), and playing violent video games ($r = .157, p = .010$). Aggression was not correlated with gender ($r = .052, p = .390$).

As predicted, objectification of girls was positively correlated with gang affiliation ($r = .142, p = .019$). It was also positively correlated with trait aggression ($r = .192, p = .001$), age ($r = .165, p = .007$), watching television ($r = .158, p = .009$), and playing violent video games ($r = .301, p < .001$). Further, it was negatively correlated with gender ($r = -.163, p = .007$), meaning that males were more likely to objectify girls.

Insert Table 1 about here

We conducted a hierarchical regression analysis to test for a gang affiliation x objectification x gender interaction. For the analyses, we standardised the continuous predictor variables in order to center them. The main effects were entered in step 1 of the analysis, the two-way and three way interaction terms were entered in the second and third steps, respectively. Because we found no significant main effect of or interaction with gender (all p 's $> .10$), we decided to collapse our data across gender and test for the predicted gang affiliation x objectification interaction (separate analyses for males and females revealed very similar patterns for both genders, which were also very similar to the pattern reported below). The analysis revealed a main effect of gang affiliation, ($b = .185$), $t(272) = 3.156, p = .002$, 95% CI (.06, .30) and a main effect of objectification, ($b = .299$), $t(272) = 5.022, p < .001$, 95% CI

(.13, .38) on aggression towards girls. These were qualified by a significant two-way interaction between these factors, ($b = -.211$), $t(272) = -3.762$, $p < .001$, 95% CI (-.30, -.10). The interaction is graphed on Figure 1. Note, however, that the pattern of the interaction was different from what we predicted. Our hypothesis was that higher levels of objectification would be associated with more aggression in both gang-affiliated and non-affiliated youth, but this relationship would be even stronger among the former. The observed interaction, however, confirmed only part of our hypothesis. The interaction pattern shows that the levels of objectification were indeed associated with more aggression among non-affiliated participants; those who objectified girls more reported being more aggressive towards them. However, levels of objectification made no difference in aggression among gang-affiliated participants. These participants tended to be more aggressive towards girls, but aggression did not differ across levels of objectification. We decomposed the interaction and assessed the significance of the slopes using PROCESS Model 1. The results revealed that under low gang affiliation, objectifying girls was associated with significantly more aggression towards them, $b = .46$, $SE = .08$, $p < .001$, 95% CI (.30, .61). Under high gang affiliation, however, there were no significant differences in aggression across levels of objectification, $b = .08$, $SE = .07$, $p = .24$, 95% CI (-.05, .21). Stated differently, compared to gang-affiliated youth, those low in gang affiliation were significantly less aggressive towards girls when they did not objectify them. When non-gang-affiliated youth did objectify girls, however, they acted just as aggressively toward them as those affiliated with gangs (see Figure 1). This suggests that sexual objectification is a detrimental factor for the treatment of adolescent females in terms of non-sexual violence and aggression.

Insert Figure 1 about here

We conducted a hierarchical regression analysis to test whether objectification of girls is a significant predictor of aggression towards them, after controlling for gender, gang affiliation, trait physical aggression, watching television, and playing violent video games. In the first step, we entered the control variables (e.g., gender, gang affiliation). These factors accounted for approximately 8% of the variance in group-based aggression, $R^2 = .082$, $F(5, 267) = 4.784$, $p < .001$. Trait physical aggression and gang affiliation were significant predictors of aggression, ($b = .149$), $t(272) = 2.133$, $p = .034$, and ($b = .226$), $t(272) = 3.593$, $p < .001$, respectively. In the second step, we entered objectification as an additional predictor of aggression towards girls, controlling for the previous factors. Objectification accounted for a significant additional 4% of the variance over and above the first group of factors, $\Delta R^2 = .042$, $F(1, 266) = 12.909$, $p < .001$. Trait physical aggression and gang affiliation became marginal predictors of aggression towards girls ($p = .056$ and $p = .074$, respectively). Thus, objectification of girls was a significant predictor of aggression aimed at them after controlling for other factors.

Discussion

In general, our findings are consistent with the proposal that sexual objectification is linked to aggression targeted at the objectified. As expected, the sexual objectification of girls was positively correlated with participants reporting being more aggressive towards them. Also as expected, gang affiliation was positively correlated with objectification, as well as aggression. Importantly, objectification was a significant predictor of aggression towards girls over and above, trait aggression, gender, gang affiliation, and age. With regards to the predicted objectification x gang affiliation interaction, however, our findings are mixed. Our original hypothesis was that objectification would be predictive of aggression in the sample, but this effect would be stronger for participants who were strongly affiliated with gangs. Surprisingly, our results showed that differences in levels of objectification were unrelated to

aggression in participants who were strongly affiliated with gangs (see Figure 1). Among participants low in gang affiliation, however, higher levels of sexual objectification were indeed associated with higher levels of aggression. Interestingly, we found no difference between males and females in the pattern of the interaction between gang affiliation and objectification. Furthermore, we found that watching television and playing violent video games were positively correlated with both sexual objectification and aggression towards girls.

In terms of the general sample (i.e., non-gang affiliated participants), our results contribute further understanding of the role that objectification plays in the expression of anti-social and violent behaviour by showing that sexual objectification is related to more general (non-sexual) types of aggression, explaining unique amounts of the variance in aggression above and beyond other relevant factors, such as trait aggression. Although previous research has shown that sexual objectification increases the risk of engaging in sexual aggression, as well as the acceptance of violence, ours is the first study to show a direct relation to general aggression. Higher levels of objectification were significant predictors of aggression towards girls. Our findings are consistent with the claim that among other negative outcomes, the perception of women as nothing but sexual objects also evokes aggression against them. As discussed in the introduction, this may be due to dehumanizing effects of objectification. Girls who are objectified may be perceived as deserving less moral concern. As a result, individuals who objectify girls may be more likely to experience less inhibition towards aggressing against them. It is also possible that objectifying girls stigmatizes them, which is then perceived as a negative attribute or characteristic of those individuals. This process has important implications for the facilitation of aggression because it has been shown that provoked individuals are more aggressive towards their target when the latter possess negative characteristics, such as out-group membership (Pedersen,

Bushman, Vasquez, & Miller, 2008). Thus, the stigma induced by objectification may be perceived as a negative characteristic of the objectified, which subsequently primes objectifying individuals for more intense aggressive response. It is important to note that the link between objectification and aggression may be particularly problematic in contexts that both encourage the sexual objectification of women and further facilitate the disinhibition of aggressive behaviour. For example, bars, nightclubs, and even house parties are social drinking contexts that often induce the expectation of sexual encounters. Such an expectation may lead to objectifying women and girls, which, when combined with the disinhibiting effects of alcohol (see Easdon & Vogel-Sprott, 2000; Fillmore & Vogel-Sprott, 1999), is likely to further increase the chances of engaging in aggression and violence towards them.

Our study has also shown that the objectification-aggression link manifests itself at least as early as the teenage years. This is important in part because it suggests that the detrimental effects of perceiving females as objects begin at an early stage of development and have the potential to be further reinforced and strengthened over a number of years, thereby becoming more robust and difficult change. The study also suggests that allowing the factors that might produce objectification to influence children poses a potentially serious risk of increasing anti-social acts towards girls.

With regards to the correlation between watching television and objectification, as well as the stronger correlation between playing violent video games and objectification, these findings are consistent with previous research (e.g., Sommers-Flanagan, Sommers-Flanagan, & Davis, 1993; Calogero et al., 2011) showing that television and media in general present significant amount of objectifying images of women. In addition, both types of media were positively correlated with aggression towards girls. It is possible that media is involved not only in momentary or long-term sexual objectification of women, but also in developing an association between objectification and aggression. In particular, violent media that

combines objectification of females with violence (e.g., video games such as Grand Theft Auto) may contribute to the objectification-aggression link. Individuals who are repeatedly exposed to such media can learn to objectify and aggress against females, both explicitly and implicitly. As previously indicated, however, our study is correlational and cannot establish causal relationships between variables. It is possible that participants who tend to sexually objectify girls are more attracted to violent video games. It is also possible that individuals who tend to aggress against girls find violent video games more entertaining, and thus, play them more often. Clearly, more research is needed to examine the role of media in the development of objectification of females and the development of the objectification-aggression link.

Contrary to expectations, sexual objectification was not predictive of aggression towards girls among gang-affiliated youth. Although, as hypothesized, gang-affiliated teenagers were more likely than those low in affiliation to objectify girls and aggress against them, aggression did not differ across levels of objectification. One reason for this finding may be that despite being more likely to objectify girls, gang-affiliated individuals in this sample adhere to norms that regulate aggression towards girls and allow it only when a justification is perceived. For instance, there may be strong norms allowing aggression towards girls (besides sexual types of aggression) for disrespecting or betraying their romantic partner. Such norms may allow other factors, such as honour codes, to take precedence over objectification in motivating aggression among gang-affiliated adolescents.

Another possibility may be that for this particular population, engaging in higher levels or rates of aggression would attract too many negative consequences or punishment from peers or authorities. As a result, the aggression levels they report may be within the range they can typically engage in without severe outcomes. Those who are affiliated with gangs

and do engage in more extreme levels of aggression might not be engaged with schools (and thus, were unlikely to participate) or might not be willing to admit to their behaviour.

Limitations

As previously stated one limitation of our study is that it is correlational. As a result, despite previous research showing that objectification produces a variety of negative outcomes, we cannot make causal attributions about the relationship between objectification and aggression. Another limitation is that our study did not examine psychological processes that might explain the link between objectification and aggressive behaviour. For instance, objectifying individuals dehumanizes them (Heflick & Goldenberg 2009; Helfick, Goldenberg, Cooper & Puvia, 2011), yet our study did not assess the degree to which objectification was related to dehumanization or how the latter might relate to aggression in our sample. Future research needs to examine the role that dehumanization might play in aggressing against objectified girls.

References

- Anderson, C. A., & Bushman, B. J. (2002). Human aggression. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 53, 27–51. doi: 10.1146/annurev.psych.53.100901.135231
- Arnett, J. J. (2002). The sounds of sex: Sex in teens' music and music videos. In J. Brown, K. Walsh-Childers, & J. Steele (Eds.), *Sexual teens, sexual media* (pp. 253-264). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Aubrey, J. S., & Frisby, C. M. (2011). Sexual objectification in music videos: A content analysis comparing gender and genre. *Mass Communication and Society*, 14, 475-501. doi: 10.1080/15205436.2010.513468
- Bernard, P., Gervais, S. J., Allen, J., Campomizzi, S., & Klein, O. (2012). Integrating sexual objectification with object versus person recognition: The sexualized body-inversion hypothesis. *Psychological Science*, 23, 469-471. doi:10.1177/0956797611434748
- Beckett, H., Brodie, I., Factor, F., Melrose, M., Pearce, J. J., Pitts, J., & Warrington, C. (2013). "It's wrong-but you get used to it": a qualitative study of gang-associated sexual violence towards, and exploitation of, young people in England. University of Bedfordshire.
- Brown, L. M., & Gilligan, C. (1992). *Meeting at the crossroads: Women's Psychology and girls' development*. New York: Ballantine.
- Buss, A. H., & Perry, M. (1992). The aggression questionnaire. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 63(3), 452. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.63.3.452>
- Cikara, M., Eberhardt, J. L., & Fiske, S. T. (2011). From agents to objects: Sexist attitudes and neural responses to sexualized targets. *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience*, 23, 540-551. doi:10.1162/jocn.2010.21497
- Calogero, R. M., Tantleff-Dunn, S. E., & Thompson, J. (2011). *Self-objectification in women:*

- Causes, consequences, and counteractions*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. doi: 10.1037/12304-000
- Collins, W. A., & Sroufe L. A. (1999). Capacity for intimate relationships: A developmental construction. In: W. Furman, B. B. Brown, & C. Feiring (Eds.), *Contemporary perspectives on adolescent romantic relationships* (pp 125-147). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Easdon, C. M., & Vogel-Sprott, M. (2000). Alcohol and behavioral control: Impaired response inhibition and flexibility in social drinkers. *Experimental and Clinical Psychopharmacology*, 8, 387–394. doi: 10.1037/1064-1297.8.3.387
- Estes, R. J., & Weiner, N. A. (2001). *The commercial sexual exploitation of children in the U.S., Canada and Mexico*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania School of Social Work.
- Fleisher, M. S., & Krienert, J. L. (2004). Life-course events, social networks, and the emergence of violence among female gang members. *Journal of community psychology*, 32, 607-622. doi: 10.1002/jcop.20022
- Fillmore, M. T., & Vogel-Sprott, M. (1999). An alcohol model of impaired inhibitory control and its treatment in humans. *Experimental and clinical psychopharmacology*, 7, 49-55. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/1064-1297.7.1.49>
- Fredrickson, B. L., & Roberts, T. A. (1997). Objectification theory. *Psychology of women quarterly*, 21, 173-206. doi: 10.1111/j.1471-6402.1997.tb00108.x
- Gervais, S. J., DiLillo, D., & McChargue, D. (2014). Understanding the link between men's alcohol use and sexual violence perpetration: The mediating role of sexual objectification. *Psychology of violence*, 4, 156-169. doi: 10.1037/a0033840
- Grauerholz, E., & King, A. (1997). Prime time sexual harassment. *Violence Against Women*, 3, 129-148. doi: 10.1177/1077801297003002003

- Gray, K., Knobe, J., Sheskin, M., Bloom, P., & Barrett, L. F. (2011). More than a body: mind perception and the nature of objectification. *Journal of personality and social psychology, 101*, 1207. doi: 10.1037/a0025883
- Haslam, N. (2006). Dehumanization: An integrative review. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 10*, 252–264.
- Heflick, N. A., & Goldenberg, J. L. (2009). Objectifying Sarah Palin: Evidence that objectification causes women to be perceived as less competent and less fully human. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 45*, 598-601.
doi:10.1016/j.jesp.2009.02.008
- Heflick, N. A., Goldenberg, J. L., Cooper, D. P., & Puvia, E. (2011). From women to objects: Appearance focus, target gender, and perceptions of warmth, morality and competence. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 47*, 572–581. doi: 10.1016/j.jesp.2010.12.020
- Lindberg, S. M., Grabe, S., & Hyde, J. S. (2007). Gender, pubertal development, and peer sexual harassment predict objectified body consciousness in early adolescence. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 17*, 723-742. doi: 10.1111/j.1532-7795.2007.00544.x
- Loughnan, S., Haslam, N., Murnane, T., Vaes, J., Reynolds, C., & Suitner, C. (2010). Objectification leads to depersonalization: The denial of mind and moral concern to objectified others. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 40*, 709–717.
doi:10.1002/ejsp.75510.1002/ejsp.755
- Loughnan, S., Pina, A., Vasquez, E. A., & Puvia, E. (2013). Sexual objectification increases rape victim blame and decreases perceived suffering. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 37*, 455-461. doi: 10.1177/0361684313485718
- Miller, J., & Decker, S. H. (2001). Young women and gang violence: Gender, street

- offending, and violent victimization in gangs. *Justice Quarterly*, 18, 115-140.
- Nussbaum, M. (1995). Objectification. *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 24, 249–291.
doi: 10.1111/j.1088-4963.1995.tb00032.x
- Nussbaum, M. C. (1999). *Sex and social justice*. New York, NY: Oxford Press.
- Palmer, C. T., & Tilley, C. F. (1995). Sexual access to females as a motivation for joining gangs: An evolutionary approach. *Journal of Sex Research*, 32(3), 213-217. doi: 10.1080/00224499509551792
- Pedersen, W. C., Bushman, B. J., Vasquez, E. A., & Miller, N. (2008). Kicking the (barking) dog effect: The moderating role of target attributes on triggered displaced aggression. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 34, 1382-1395. doi: 10.1177/0146167208321268
- Schultz, J. (2005). Reading the Catsuit: Serena Williams and the production of blackness at the 2002 US Open. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, 29, 338-357. doi: 10.1177/0193723505276230
- Sommers-Flanagan, R., Sommers-Flanagan, J., & Davis, B. (1993). What's happening on music television? A gender role content analysis. *Sex roles*, 28, 745-753.
doi:10.1007/BF00289991
- Rudman, L. A., & Mescher, K. (2012). Of Animals and Objects Men's Implicit Dehumanization of Women and Likelihood of Sexual Aggression. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 38(6), 734-746. doi: 10.1177/0146167212436401
- Totten, M. (2003). Girlfriend abuse as a form of masculinity construction among violent, marginal male youth. *Men and Masculinities*, 6, 70-92. doi: 10.1177/1097184X03253138
- Vasquez, E. A., Osman, S., & Wood, J. L. (2012). Rumination and the Displacement of

- Aggression in United Kingdom Gang-Affiliated Youth. *Aggressive behavior*, 38, 89-97. doi: 10.1002/ab.20419
- Ward, L. M. (1995). Talking about sex: Common themes about sexuality in the prime-time television programs children and adolescents view most. *Journal of youth and adolescence*, 24, 595-615. doi: 10.1007/BF01537058
- Ward, L. M., & Rivadenyra, R. (2002). Dancing, strutting, and bouncing in cars: The women of BET music videos. In *annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, Chicago*.
- Waytz, A., Gray, K., Epley, N., & Wegner, D. M. (2010). Causes and consequences of mind perception. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 14, 383–388. doi:10.1016/j.tics.2010.05.006
- Zurbriggen, E. L., Collins, R. L., Lamb, S., Roberts, T. A., Tolman, D. L., Ward, L. M., & Blake, J. (2007). Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls. *American Psychological Association: Washington, DC*.

Table 1. Cronbach's Alphas, Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations Among Aggression Towards Girls, Gang Affiliation, Age, gender, Objectification, Watching TV, and Playing Violent Video Games.

Factor	α	Mean	SD	Correlations								
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
1) Aggression	.74	2.04	.97	—								
2) Gang affiliation	.77	2.48	1.07	.21*	—							
3) Age	N/A	13.20	1.40	.08	.05	—						
4) Gender	N/A	N/A	N/A	-.05	-.03	-.57*	—					
5) Objectification	.79	2.02	1.11	.27*	.14*	.17*	-.16*	—				
6) Trait Aggression	.72	3.40	.98	.23*	.40*	.09	-.16*	.19*	—			
7) Watching TV				.15*	.16*	.01	.02	.16*	.15*	—		
8) Violent Games				.16*	.12*	.11	-.26*	.30*	.28*	.35*	—	

Note: numbers in parentheses next to factor name indicate number of items in composite measures.

* Significant at $p < .05$

Figure 1. The interaction of gang affiliation and objectification of girls on aggression. Variables are set at +1, -1 standard deviations (high and low, respectively) from the means.

