Sexualization reduces helping intentions towardsfemale victims of intimate partner violence through mediation of moral patiency

Maria Giuseppina Pacilli, University of Perugia

Stefano Pagliaro, University of Chieti-Pescara,

Steve Loughnan, University of Edinburgh

Sarah Gramazio, University of Padua

Federica Spaccatini, University of Perugia

and Anna Costanza Baldry, Second University of Naples, Italy

This paper has been accepted for publication in the *British Journal of Social Psychology*

Abstract

This paper examines the influence of female sexualization on people's willingness to provide help in cases of intimate partner violence (IPV). We examined how sexualization may make women seem lacking moral patiency and moral virtue both of which may lead to a reduced willingness to help. In the first study, participants read a fictitious newspaper article describing an IPV incident. They were then presented with a picture of the ostensible victim depicting the woman with either a sexualized or non-sexualized appearance. Participants judged both the victim's moral patiency and morality, and then expressed their willingness to provide help to that victim. Although the sexualized victim was viewed as a lesser moral patient (Studies 1 and 2) and as less moral (Study 2), it was seeing the victim as unworthy of moral patiency rather than lacking moral virtue (immoral) that linked sexualization to reduced help. Controlling for participants' sexism and women's admission of infidelity, Study 2 replicated that sexualization reduced helping intentions through a lack of moral patiency. Practical implications are discussed.

Sexualization reduces helping intentions towardsfemale victims of intimate partner violence through mediation of moral patiency

In the last decades, the portrayal of women and girls by western media has become increasingly sexualized. While the overuse of sexualized women in advertising has beenlargely acknowledged and condemned (APA, 2007; Gill, 2008; Zurbriggen & Roberts, 2013), far less attention has been devoted to the increasing focus of *news* media on thesexualized appearance of women. A relevant exception pertains research on sexualization of women in politics (Carlin & Winfrey, 2009) and the negative consequences that the focus on female candidates' appearance has on their credibility (Funk & Coker, 2016) and intention to vote for them (Heflick & Goldenberg, 2009). Beyond politics, another relevant and overlooked case of female sexualization spreading in news media regards gender violence and more specifically intimate partner violence (from now on, IPV), thatis, the physical or psychological harm inflicted by a current or former partner (WHO, 2013). In Italy, where we conducted the present research, more and more often IPV news is accompanied with sexualized images of women, for instance, battered women partially undressed or with sexy clothing or postures, who are often not the real victims of the violence and whose sexualization is not integral to the violence described

(Zanardo, 2010).

In the present paper, we thus investigated whether sexualization influences the perception of female victims of IPV. Specifically, we examined in two studies the role of sexualized appearance of victims in reducing individuals' willingness to help them. While the effects of sexualization have been recently examined in relation to rape crimes (Bernard, Loughnan, Marchal, Godart, & Klein, 2015, for stranger rape; Loughnan, Pina, Vasquez, & Puvia, 2013, for acquaintance rape), no research has been conducted in the field of IPV. Moreover, while up to now extensive research has been conducted on the negative consequences of sexualization on social perception, no research has directly examined how a sexualized image of a battered woman affects bystanders' helping intentions. In this respect, we suggest that if violence against sexualized women reflects the belief that they suffer less (Holland & Haslam, 2013; Loughnan *et al.*, 2010, 2013), this belief should be present not only among people enacting violence but *also* among bystanders judging the suffering of women who have been harmed.

The effects of sexualization on social perception

Sexualization refers to the depiction of someone in a highly sexual suggestive manner and it is not reducible to a single characteristic, but rather reflects a complex of interlocking factors such as extent of nudity, revealing, or suggestive attire, and poses suggestive of sexual

activity or availability (Hatton & Trautner, 2011; Pacilli, Tomasetto, & Cadinu, 2016). Although sexualization and sexual objectification are sometimes treated interchangeably (APA, 2007), they can be considered as related but distinct constructs (Loughnan & Pacilli, 2014; Smolak, Murnen, & Myers, 2014).

It is now well established within psychology that sexualizing a target increases the extent to which that target is sexually objectified. Sexual objectification can be understood as a particular form of dehumanization, which involves an implicit or explicit reduction of a person to an object (Loughnan & Pacilli, 2014; Vaes, Loughnan, & Puvia, 2014). Research has shown that at a basic cognitive level, people process and remember sexualized women as objects: Sexualized women are perceived as collections of body parts rather than whole entities (Bernard, Gervais, Allen, Campomizzi, & Klein, 2012), women's sexualized body parts are better remembered (Gervais, Vescio, Maass, Förster, & Suitner, 2012), and people easily confuse one sexualized women for another sexualized women, tacitly viewing them as interchangeable rather than individual (Gervais, Bernard, Klein, & Allen, 2013; Gervais, Vescio, & Allen, 2012). The effects of sexualization extend beyond how a woman is cognitively processed and remembered to influence her perceived humanity. Indeed, at an implicit level, sexualized women are associated with animals, amounting to an implicit dehumanization (Vaes, Paladino, & Puvia, 2011). At an

explicit level, they are denied human nature (Heflick & Goldenberg, 2009) and mental states (Holland & Haslam, 2013; Loughnan *et al.*, 2010, 2013), particularly those associated with intelligence and competence (Gray, Knobe, Sheskin, Bloom, & Barrett, 2011). In short, people see sexualized women as less than fully human.

Sexual objectification and moral relevance

Whether individuals are deemed morally relevant is partially dependent on perception of them having humanity (Bastian, Laham, Wilson, Haslam, & Koval, 2011) and a mind (Gray & Wegner, 2009; Waytz, Gray, Epley, & Wegner, 2010). To understand who is morally relevant, it is useful to speak in terms of *moral patiency*, meant as the capability of experiencing psychological or physical pleasure and pain (Bentham, 1789; Goodpaster, 1978; Gray & Wegner, 2009; Singer, 1979). For example, adult humans are typically considered moral patients, making it both morally good to help them and morally wrong to hurt them. Emphasizing an individual's humanity decreases people's willingness to harm them, and sacrificing humanized others activates neural regions associated with negative emotions and behaviour control, indicative that it is a difficult, emotional decision (Majdandzic *et al.*, 2012). By contrast, inanimate objects (e.g., rocks) are not typically considered moral patients; because they lack any moral patiency, they are not morally relevant – moral behaviours do not apply to them – and therefore actions towards them carry no moral weight. Although adult humans and objects have clear moral

patiency, some entities fall between these two anchors (e.g., animals, cf. Bastian & Loughnan, 2016; Loughnan, Bastian, & Haslam, 2014). Importantly, sexualized women occupy this position between a person and an object with regard to moral patiency. They are typically found to lack moral patiency relative to non-sexualized women (Holland & Haslam, 2013; Loughnan *et al.*, 2010, 2013).

As regards the empirical relationship between sexual objectification and moral concern, there is some evidence that people are less concerned with harm inflicted on objectified women (MacKinnon, 2006). Rudman and Mescher (2012) demonstrated that men who tend to perceive women as animals and objects possess more rape supportive attitudes, an increased likelihood to sexually harass, and higher levels of rape proclivity. These effects might especially target sexualized women. When hostile sexist men – those who are also likely to aggress against women (Archer, 2006) – were presented with images of sexualized women, they showed decreased neural activation of the network reliably associated with mentalizing and perceiving social targets (i.e., the medial prefrontal cortex, posterior cingulate, and bilateral temporal poles; Cikara, Eberhardt, & Fiske, 2011). Therefore, at a basic neural level, men who are prepared to hurt women also do not see them as fully human.

In addition to these effects of moral patiency, there is considerable evidence that women's sexualized appearance directly changes evaluations of their moral virtue. Moral virtue of a social target refers to his/her

perceived correctness and involves traits such as honesty, sincerity, loyalty, and trustworthiness (Brambilla, Rusconi, Sacchi, & Cherubini, 2011; Leach, Ellemers, & Barreto, 2007). Abbey, Cozzarelli, McLaughlin, and Harnish (1987) showed that women dressed in a sexualized way were perceived as less sincere and more sexually promiscuous. Similarly, Cahoon and Edmonds (1989) found that women dressed in sexualized clothing were perceived as more sexually exciting *and* more manipulative. Although focusing on 'sexy women' as a social category rather than perceptions of individual women depicted in a sexualized manner, stereotype content research has revealed that they are seen to robustly lack warmth; they are seen as anti-social (Eckes, 2002; Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002). This perceived lack of warmth indicates that sexualized women might be seen as holding ill-intent. More recent evidence indicates that women who experience a sexualized gaze – a male gaze directed at their bodies – come to see *themselves* as less moral (Chen, Teng, & Zhang, 2013).

In sum, in addition to be seen as lesser moral patients, sexualized women may be seen as 'bad', immoral women. We typically do not like people we consider immoral, and we do not help people we do not like (Pagliaro, Brambilla, Sacchi, D'Angelo, & Ellemers, 2013; Riva, Brambilla, & Vaes, 2016). To the extent that we do not like people we consider immoral, perceived immorality could reduce willingness to help sexualized female victims. Beyond liking, if sexualized women are seen

as 'bad women', we may be more prepared to accept bad things happening

to them and less willing to assist them when they do. If this occurs, the

reduction in helping for sexualized victims should be mediated by

perceived immorality. While moral virtue pertains the domain of (im/moral)

behaviour or behavioural intentions of a social target, moral patiency

pertains feelings and emotions perceived by a social actor when he/she is

the target of im/moral actions. This difference is particularly relevant when

we deal with the perception of a victim of domestic violence, since it

allows us to better understand and disentangle the negative effects of

sexualized appearance of that victim on helping intentions towards her.

The present research

In the current research, we were primarily interested in understanding

whether and how the sexualization of women can negatively affect people's

helping intentions towards them in the important domain of IPV. We

reasoned that sexualization may be tied to withdrawal of help, indicative of a

lack of moral concern for women. There is initial evidence for this idea.

Loughnan *et al.* (2013) showed that sexualized rape victims are perceived as

less affected by their assault; they were expected to make a speedier recovery

with fewer resources than non-objectified victims, consistent with the idea

that their suffering was not as great as non-objectified women. Sexualization

may prompt sexual objectification (Bernard *et al.*, 2012; Gervais, Vescio, &

Allen, 2012; Gervais, Vescio, Maass, et al., 2012), which reduces a

woman's moral patiency (Loughnan *et al.*, 2010, 2013). Since moral

patiency both protects people from harm *and* entitles them to help (Gray & Wegner, 2009), women perceived as lesser moral patients may also be viewed as less entitled to receive help and support: They fall outside our circle of moral concern. If sexualized women are seen as lacking moral patiency, they lose moral relevance and people should be less concerned about both harming and (not) helping them. Considering the purpose of our research to examine the effects of sexualized appearance on perceptions of a battered woman, we focused our attention only on the component of moral patiency related with the experience of psychological and physical pain. In the first study, we were interested in examining the negative effects of sexualization on helping intentions considering the role of moral patiency and moral virtue attributed to the victim. Study 2 aimed to further examine in a community sample the relationship between sexualization of an IPV victim, her moral patiency, and people's helping intentions towards her by also controlling for target's admission/confession of infidelity. Recent studies have shown that the admission (vs. denial) of infidelity of a female victim of IPV predicts lower willingness to help the victim (Baldry, Pacilli, & Pagliaro, 2015; Baldry & Pagliaro, 2014). It is currently unknown whether admission of infidelity affects moral patiency and moral virtue of a female victim of IPV.

Moreover, to our knowledge, no studies have directly examined whether the effects of sexualization remain after controlling for participants'

sexism. This is a relevant issue for better understanding the specific influence of sexualization. Seeing women as socially inferior and passively dependent on men plays a crucial role in the legitimation and toleration of IPV (Yi & Straus, 1990). Several research studies have indeed shown that sexism is associated with the justification of violent male behaviour as well as blaming the battered woman (Haj-Yahia, 2005; Haj-Yahia, Sousa, Alnabilsy, & Elias, 2015; Valor-Segura, Expósito, & Moya, 2011). Thus, in Study 2 we measured individuals' sexism.

STUDY 1

Consistent with previous studies that have examined the effect of sexualization on the perception of a social target (Abbey *et al.*, 1987; Cahoon & Edmonds, 1989; Loughnan *et al.*, 2010, 2013), we expected to find that sexualized women will be perceived as lacking both moral patiency and moral virtue (immoral) compared to non-sexualized women (Hp1). Focusing on the extent to which sexualization shaped people's willingness to help a victim, we anticipated that people would be less willing to help sexualized female victims compared to non-sexualized victims (Hp2). Moreover, we expected the effect of sexualization on helping to be mediated by reduced perceived moral patiency (Hp3). We also tested an alternative hypothesis, according to which sexualization may shift willingness to help female victims of IPV by leading to these women being viewed as lacking moral virtue, as relatively *immoral* and therefore less deserving of help when compared to non-sexualized

women (Hp4).

Method

Design and participants

One hundred and nine Italians were recruited at a university campus (60 females, 49 males; mean age = 25.42; *SD* = 4.30) and voluntarily participated in the study. They were randomly assigned either to the sexualized or to the non-sexualized condition.

Procedure

Participants were asked to answer a paper-and-pencil questionnaire. They were asked to read a fictitious article from a local newspaper, describing an IPV incident. We chose to consider an episode of domestic violence 'provoked' by the suspected infidelity of the victim, as research shows that one of the most common factors that triggers domestic violence is the males suspicion of his partner's infidelity (Miller & Maner, 2008; Vandello & Cohen, 2003). More precisely, in this incident, 'Anna' is described as married to 'Luciano'. One evening, Luciano returns home agitated, accusing Anna of infidelity. Despite her protests of innocence, her husband repeatedly beats her up until she loses consciousness. Her screams were heard by the neighbours (see Appendix for full text). In this first study, we chose to keep constant the uncertainty regarding infidelity; Luciano accuses Anna and she denies it.

Manipulation of sexualization

Subsequently, participants were presented with a picture of the fictitious victim, ostensibly taken from her Facebook profile. Since sexualization involves multiple components such as the level of undress, suggestive postures, and sexy clothing (Hatton & Trautner, 2011), the pictures differed on multiple dimensions. In the *sexualized condition* ($N = 53$; 30 females; 23 males), the picture depicted a woman wearing sexy clothing (i.e., low-necked and skin-tight dress), lying on a sofa (see Appendix, Figure A1).

In the *non-sexualized condition* ($N = 56$; 30 female; 26 male), instead, the picture depicted the same woman sitting in a pub wearing casual clothing[1] (i.e., jeans and sweater; see Appendix, Figure A2). The two pictures have been previously selected through a pilot study where we asked a separate group of 30 undergraduates (16 female; 14 male; mean age $= 24.90$, $SD = 1.47$) to evaluate the sexiness of the woman (from $1 = not\ at\ all$ to $9 = very\ much$). From the results, it emerged that in the *sexualized condition* the woman was perceived as sexier ($M = 6.20$, $SD = 2.08$) than in the *non-sexualized condition* ($M = 3.40$, $SD = 1.40$), $t(28) = 4.33$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 1.56$.

Moral patiency

After reading the IPV incident and seeing the picture of the ostensible victim, participants were asked to indicate how much (1) physical and (2) psychological pain she had experienced as a consequence of her husband's

behaviour, on a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 9 (*very much*).

Responses to these two items were averaged to form an index of *perceived moral patiency* of the victim, $r(105) = .55$, $p < .001$ (Gray & Wegner, 2009).

Moral virtue

Attribution of moral virtue to the victim was measured asking participants to indicate the extent to which they rated the women as *trustworthy*, *honest*, and *sincere* on a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 9 (*very much*; Leach *et al.*, 2007; Pacilli, Roccato, Pagliaro, & Russo, 2016). A moral trait index was calculated by averaging the responses to the three items (Cronbach's a = .80).

Manipulation check

To check the appropriateness of our manipulation, we asked participants to rate the extent to which they perceived the woman as sexy on a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 9 (*very much*).

Helping intentions towards the IPV victim

Moral concern towards the IPV victim was operationalized through participants' helping intentions towards the IPV victim. In line with previous research (Baldry & Pagliaro, 2014; Baldry *et al.* 2015), participants were asked to imagine themselves as the neighbour of the victim – that is, an indirect witness – and to indicate to what extent they would themselves engage in each of four specific reporting behaviours (e.g., 'Call the police'; 'Reporting the case to the woman's family'; 'Reporting it to the other

neighbors informed about the violence'; 'Offer support to the victim'), on a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all likely*) to 9 (*very likely*). Their responses were averaged to construct a single measure (Cronbach's a = .64) indicating helping intentions towards the IPV victim.

Results

Correlations among the key variables are presented in Table 1.

Data screening

We inspected for the presence of outliers through a commonly recommended approach for multivariate outlier detection, that is, the Mahalanobis distance (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). The Mahalanobis distance statistic follows a chi-square distribution, with the degree of freedom equal to the number of predictors in the regression (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Calculating Mahalanobis distance considering perceived moral patiency, moral virtue, and helping intention, we did not find any outliers.

Manipulation check

Our manipulation was successful and the sexiness of the woman was perceived differently according to the experimental condition: In the *sexualized condition,* the woman was perceived as sexier ($M = 6.15$, *SD* $= 1.82$) than in the *non-sexualized condition* ($M = 4.29$, *SD* $= 1.82$), $t(107) = -5.35$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 1.02$.

Perceived moral patiency and moral virtue

With regard to the perception of the victim's moral patiency, the analysis showed the predicted effect of condition, $F(1, 105) = 4.48$, $p = .037$, $g_p^2 = .041$. As expected, sexualized targets were denied moral patiency ($M = 7.28$, $SD = 1.46$) relative to non- sexualized targets ($M = 7.83$, $SD = 1.27$). Attribution of moral patiency changed according to participants' gender $F(1, 105) = 5.92$, $p = .017$, $g^2 = .053$, with men ($M = 7.22$, $SD = 1.41$) less likely to ascribe moral patiency to the victim than women ($M = 7.84$, $SD = 1.31$). However, the interaction between gender and condition was not significant, $F(1, 105) = 0.63$, $p = .430$, $g^2 = .006$. As regards moral virtue, results did not confirm our prediction and no significant effect emerged for the condition, $F(1, 105) = 2.47$, $p = .119$, $g^2 = .023$. Attribution of moral virtue changed according to participants' gender, $F(1, 105) = 4.14$, $p = .044$, $g^2 = .038$, with men ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 1.33$) less likely to attribute moral virtue to the victim than women ($M = 4.68$, $SD = 1.53$). The interaction between gender and condition did not reach significance, $F(1, 105) = 2.41$, $p = .124$, $g^2 = .022$. Partially in line with Hp1, these findings indicate that sexualized women are viewed a lesser moral patient compared to non-sexualized women.

Table 1. Correlations among key Study 1 variables

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Sexualization[a]				
2. Moral patiency	—.20*			
3. Moral virtue	—.16	.13		
4. Helping intention	—.25**	.29**	.16	

Note. [a]Sexualization was coded as: $1 = non\text{-}sexualized, 1 = sexualized$.

*p < .05; **p < .01

Helping intentions towards the IPV victim

In line with Hypothesis 2, participants expressed less helping intentions towards the victim when she was presented using a sexualized picture (M = 5.06; SD = 1.46) than when she was presented through a neutral picture (M = 5.85; SD = 1.62), $F(1, 105) = 8.46$, $p = .004$, g^2 = .075. Gender proved marginally significant, $F(1, 105) = 3.89$, $p = .051$, $g^2 = .036$, with women (M = 5.71; SD = 1.46) expressing a tendency to help more the victim compared to the men (M = 5.17; SD = 1.69) while the interaction between gender and condition did not yield significance, $F(1, 105) = 1.58$, $p = .212$, $g^2 = .015$. It is important to recall the victim was the same woman in both cases, simply presented in a different manner.

Mediation analysis

We conducted a multiple mediation analysis to test whether the effect of condition (coded as $-1 = non\text{-}sexualized$; $1 = sexualized$) on the helping intentions towards the IPV victim was mediated by the attribution of moral patiency. The overall equation was significant, $R^2 = .12$, $F(2, 106) = 7.36$, $p = -.001$. We followed the procedure described by Hayes (2013) for estimating indirect effects. We used bootstrapping with 1,000 resamples to compute 95% confidence intervals using a model containing moral patiency as mediator (PROCESS model no. 4). Confidence intervals that do not contain zero denote statistically significant indirect effects. The bootstrapping procedure revealed that perceived moral patiency significantly mediated the effect of condition ($b = .08, SE = .05$, CI: LL $= 0.2222$; UL $= 0.0097$). Therefore, in line with Hypothesis 3, the IPV victim was significantly less likely to receive help from bystanders because she was viewed as a lesser moral patient.

Discussion

This first study showed that a sexualized woman is perceived as a lesser moral patient, compared to non-sexualized woman. Moreover, we showed that people express less helping intentions towards a sexualized woman. Finally, our results showed that the attribution of moral patiency mediated the relationship between sexualization and people's helping intentions. In particular, people are less willing to help a victim of IPV because she is considered a lesser moral patient. Once perceived as 'an object', or better a

'sexual object', a woman deserves less moral regard and, as a consequence, is less deserving of our help and support.

STUDY 2

Study 2 aimed to further elaborate on the relationship between sexualization and people's helping intentions towards IPV victims. In particular, Study 2 extended Study 1 in multiple ways. First, we tested whether a contextual feature of the IPV situation, that is, the target's admission or denial of infidelity, could affect perceived moral patiency, moral virtue, and helping intentions. Second, given the modest reliability of the helping intentions measure, we improved the operationalization of this variable by taking into account a wider range of possible helping intentions. Third, we measured and considered in the hypothesized model participants' benevolent and hostile sexism. Finally, to increase ecological validity of our results, we recruited an Italian community sample of participants.

In line with Study 1 and controlling for participants' sexist beliefs, we expected to confirm that sexualized (vs. non-sexualized) appearance would reduce moral patiency (Hp1) and helping intentions (Hp2) towards the victim. Once more, and as a further check of the results reported in Study 1, we examined in an exploratory vein whether the sexualized appearance of the battered woman impacted upon the victim's moral virtue. As regards the role of admission of infidelity, since no research has examined its effect on moral patiency and moral virtue, we do not advance a hypothesis in this regard. Recent studies have shown that the

admission (vs. denial) of infidelity of a female victim of IPV predicts lower willingness to help the victim (Baldry & Pagliaro, 2014; Baldry *et al.*, 2015). Thus, we hypothesized that admission of infidelity should reduce helping intention towards the victim (Hp3). Finally, controlling for participants' sexism, we expected to confirm the mediational pattern of Study 1 in which sexualization reduced helping intentions towards the mediation of moral patiency and not moral virtue (Hp4).

Method

Design and participants

One hundred and fifty Italians voluntarily participated in an online study. The sample comprised of 87 females and 63 males; 29.3% of the sample was 18–29 years old, 38% of the sample was 40–49; and 32.7% of the sample was 50–65 years old. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four experimental conditions crossed between *target's sexualization* (sexualized or non-sexualized) and *target's admission of infidelity* (target admits or target does not admit).

Procedure

Participants were asked to read the same fictitious article of Study 1 about Anna. According to their experimental conditions, participants read that Anna admits ($n = 75$) or denies ($n = 75$) her infidelity. After reading the scenario, according to their experimental conditions, participants were presented with the picture of the fictitious victim (sexualized $n = 73$; non-sexualized $= 77$). The pictures used in Study 2 were the same as

in Study 1, with one important change in the non-sexualized condition. In particular, we cropped the alcoholic drink from the scene, in order to avoid a possible confounding effect of alcohol (Figure A3). Participants were then asked to complete an almost identical questionnaire as in Study 1.

Moral patiency

After reading the IPV episode and seeing the fictitious picture of the victim, participants were asked to indicate how much (1) physical and (2) psychological pain she had experienced as a consequence of her husband's behaviour, on a scale ranging from 1 (*none at all*) to 9 (*very much*). As in Study 1, responses to these two items were averaged to form an index of *perceived moral patiency* of the victim, $r(134) = .68, p < .001$.

Moral virtue

Attribution of moral virtue to the victim was measured by asking participants to indicate the extent to which they rated the women as *trustworthy*, *honest,* and *sincere* on a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 9 (*very much*). In line with Study 1, a moral traits index was calculated by averaging the responses to the three items (Cronbach's a = .89).

Helping intentions towards the IPV victim

As mentioned above, in order to improve our measure of helping intentions, we added two further items (i.e., 'Take the woman to the women's crisis center' and 'Go straight to Luciano to ask him to give an

explanation of what happened'). This resulted in a higher reliability of the scale (Cronbach's a = .75) compared to the one used in Study 1.

Sexism

Participants' sexism was measured using the Ambivalent Sexist Inventory (Glick & Fiske, 1996), a well-known and widely adopted scale consisting of 22 items, rated on a 6-point rating scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). Responses to these 22 items were averaged to form a single index of ambivalent sexism (Cronbach's a = .91).

Manipulation check

To check the appropriateness of the manipulation of admission of infidelity, we asked participants to remind if the woman admitted or not admitted the infidelity. The sexiness of the picture was measured, as in Study 1, asking participants to rate the extent to which they perceived the woman as sexy on a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 9 (*very much*). Finally, participants were thanked and thoroughly debriefed.

Results

Correlations among the key variables are presented in Table 2.

Data screening and manipulation check

As in Study 1, in order to detect multivariate outliers, we adopted the Mahalanobis distance approach with the conservative probability estimate for a case being outlier of $p < .001$ for the chi-square value (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Calculating Mahalanobis distance considering four variables (i.e., perceived moral patiency, moral virtue,

helping intention, and ambivalent sexism), two participants resulted with a probability of $p = .0002$ and $p = .0003$ and thus were removed. Moreover, sixteen participants (10.7%) failed to correctly recall the infidelity of Anna.

Table 2. Correlations among key Study 2 variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Sexualization[a]					
2. Moral patiency	−.23**				
3. Moral virtue	−.31***	.13			
4. Helping intention	−.12	.19*	.16°		
5. Ambivalent sexism	.21*	.02	.07	.17°	

Notes. [a]Sexualization was coded as: $1 = non\text{-}sexualized$, $1 = sexualized$.
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$; °$p < .10$

Thus, they were removed from the subsequent analyses, which were conducted on the remaining sample of 132 participants. The manipulation check revealed that we successfully manipulated perceived sexiness. Participants perceived the woman differently according to the experimental condition: In the *sexualized condition*, the woman was perceived as sexier ($M = 6.36, SD = 2.11$) than in the *non-sexualized condition* ($M = 4.48, SD = 2.02$), $F(1,$

130) $= 27.08$, $p < .001$, $g^2 = .172$. Given that neither a main effect of participant gendernor interaction between participant gender and the conditions emerged on any of the dependent variables, this variable was omitted from further analysis.

Perceived moral patiency and moral virtue

We performed a 2 (*Sexualization of the target*: Sexualized vs. Non-sexualized) 9 2 (*Admission of Infidelity*: Admission vs. Non-admission) analysis of covariance (ANCOVA)on perceived moral patiency and covaried out ambivalent sexism. Ambivalent sexism did not emerge as significant covariate, $F(1, 127) = 0.47$, $p = .500$, $g_p^2 = .004$. As expected with Hypothesis 1, the analysis revealed a main effect of sexualization, $F(1, 127) = 7.73$, $p = .006$, $g_p^2 = .057$, showing that sexualized targets were attributed less moral patiency ($M = 7.51$, $SD = 1.59$) relative to non-sexualized targets ($M = 8.15$, $SD = 1.21$). Neither the main effect of admission of infidelity, $F(1, 127) = 2.01$, $p = .159$, $g^2 = .016$, nor the two-way interaction reached significance, $F (1, 127) = 0.01$, $p = .933$, $g^2 = .000$.

As regards moral virtue, the same ANCOVA was conducted. Ambivalent sexism did not emerge as a significant covariate, $F(1, 127) = 2.38$, $p_p = .125$ $g_p^2 = .018$. The analysis showed a main effect of sexualization: Sexualized targets were attributed less moral virtue ($M = 4.22$, $SD = 1.67$) compared to non-sexualized targets ($M = 5.35$, $SD = 1.81$), $F(1, 127) = 16.94$, $p < .001$, $g^2 = .118$. A significant main effect of admission of infidelity emerged showing that women who admitted the infidelity were attributed less moral virtue ($M = 4.52$, $SD =$

1.86) compared to those who did not admit ($M = 5.12, SD = 1.75$), $F(1, 127) = 4.04$, $p = .047$, $g^2 = .031$. The interaction between sexualization and admission was not significant, $F(1, 127) = 0.21$, $p = .651$, $g^2 = .002$.

Helping intentions towards the IPV victim

A similar 2 9 2 ANCOVA on participants' helping intentions towards the IPV victim was conducted. Ambivalent sexism emerged as significant covariate, $F(1,127) = 4.28$, $p = .041$, $g^2 = .033$. The main effect of sexualization was marginally significant, $F(1, 127) = 3.49$, $p = .064$, $g^2 = .027$ indicating a tendency of participants to express less helping intentions towards the sexualized ($M = 6.00$, $SD = 1.41$) compared to the non-sexualized victim ($M = 6.34$, $SD = 1.31$). Differently from what we formulated in Hypothesis 3, admission of infidelity did not affect participants' helping intentions, $F(1,127) = 2.01$, $p = .158$, $g^2 = .016$. Similarly, the interaction between sexualization and admission of infidelity did not reach significance, $F(1, 127) = 0.45$, $p = .503$, $g^2 = .004$.

Mediation analysis

Based on the results presented above, we then tested a mediation model in which the relation between target's sexualization and helping intentions towards the victim was mediated by perceived victim's moral patiency and moral virtue (PROCESS model number 4).

As in Study 1, target's sexualization was effect-coded (coded as 1 = *non-sexualized*; 1 = *sexualized*). Ambivalent sexism and admission of infidelity were introduced as covariates in the model, with none emerging

as a significant covariate.

The overall equation was significant, $R^2 = .09$, $F(5, 126) = 4.98$, $p = .029$. We followed the procedure described by Hayes (2013) for estimating indirect effects, and checking whether the reduction in the direct effect may be attributed to our proposed mediators. We used bootstrapping with 1,000 resamples to compute 95% confidence intervals using a model containing *both* moral virtue and moral patiency as mediators. The bootstrapping procedure revealed that perceived moral patiency significantly mediated the effect of condition ($b = .05$, $SE = .04$, CI: LL $= 0.1489$; UL $= 0.0012$), whereas perceived moral virtue did not ($b = .04$, $SE = .04$, CI: LL $= 0.1419$; UL $= 0.0368$). Therefore, as expected with Hypothesis 4 and consistent with Study 1, the IPV victim was significantly less likely to receive help from bystanders because she was viewed as a lesser moral patient, not because she was viewed as immoral.[2]

Discussion

Study 2 confirmed the main findings in Study 1, showing that controlling for admission of infidelity of the victim, sexualization impacts on both individuals' perception (in terms of moral patiency and moral virtue) of the victim, and willingness to help her. Nevertheless, individuals' tendency to help the victim seems to depend upon her perceived moral patiency, rather than her moral virtue. Importantly, this emerged to be the case even when controlling for the sexist beliefs endorsed by participants. In short, Study 2 employed a more rigorous method and a broader sample of participants and

replicated Study 1.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Research has shown that when a woman is objectified, she is the target of greater hostility, harassment, and violent intent, and is seen as suffering less (Cikara *et al.*, 2011; Loughnan *et al.*, 2013; Rudman & Mescher, 2012). Based on previous studies showing that the lack of moral relevance a sexualized woman receives enables her to be violated (Loughnan *et al.*, 2013), in the present research we expected and found that it additionally impedes her from being helped. In the first study, we expected and found that sexualized women are seen as lesser moral patients compared to non-sexualized women, and their reduced moral patiency was linked to reduced willingness to help. The second study further investigated whether other misperceptions affected individual's tendency to help the victim, such as her infidelity and sexism. Thus, we confirmed that perceived moral patiency (but not moral virtue) significantly mediated the effect of sexualization on helping intentions towards the victim, and this pattern was robust to admissions of infidelity and sexist beliefs. Therefore, sexualized victims fail to elicit helping compared to non-sexualized victims not because they are perceived as bad people, but because they are considered as less able to perceive pain.

The current research extends the literature on sexual objectification beyond mistreatment to look at the withdrawal of prosocial behaviour, specifically helping behaviour. We not only highlight some negative

consequences of sexualization, but we also tried to more deeply comprehend the mechanisms explaining why sexualization causes negative social perception towards women, emphasizing the role of moral patiency. Our results revealed that a sexualized target is less likely to be the recipient of a moral action. Moreover, previous literature has considered the role of sexualization in the realm of rape crimes and measured perceptions of victim blame. Here we manipulated a blame-related variable (i.e., admission of infidelity, in Study 2), and we did not find a significant interaction between sexualization and infidelity admission on any dependent variables. It is interesting to focus upon the fact that while sexualization refers to the physical *appearance* of the victim, admission of infidelity refers to the *behaviour* of the victim. Therefore, our results indicate that sexualization strongly affects the perception of a victim of IPV and helping intention towards her, independent of her actual behaviour. This issue is worth noting since it shows a powerful and specific role of sexualization on reactions to another's severe mistreatment.

Limitations and future research directions

This research has some limitations to be addressed in future research. We operationalized sexualization considering it as marked by different interdependent factors such as extent of nudity, revealing clothing, heavy makeup, and poses suggestive of sexual activity or availability. Nevertheless, future studies should try to better disentangle the independent

effect of each different component of sexualization in affecting perceived moral patiency and helping intentions towards a target victim of violence. As regards our operationalization of moral patiency, we focused and measured only reduced ability to experience pain. Since in literature moral patiency is more generally defined as the capacity to 'experience', including both pain and pleasure (Gray & Wegner, 2009), future studies should better disentangle the effects of sexualization of a female victim of IPV on both the two components of moral patiency.

Moreover, we relied on a specific scenario of domestic violence, that is, the one in which the victim was suspected of or admitted to infidelity. In this regard, future studies should investigate in depth the role of sexualized appearance in reducing helping intentions towards battered women in scenarios of domestic violence where (suspected) infidelity is not involved. Future research should also consider further factors that can explain how sexualization negatively affects helping intentions towards battered women, for instance, specific emotions elicited by the target such as disgust versus indifference (Morris & Goldenberg, 2015), attitudes of victim blame, or personal knowledge of battered women.

Although these studies highlight a clear link between sexualization and bystanders' behavioural intentions, individual's actual behaviour could deviate. Thus, a further extension would be to consider actual behaviours such as actual helping (i.e., intervening in a case of witnessed IPV) or more distal behaviours (such as, signing a petition in favour of the

victims of violence), so as to provide the present research with greater ecological validity.

Practice implications

Media can exert a strong influence on the beliefs and attitudes of people towards a given phenomenon, influencing the way of perceiving it in terms of relevance, seriousness, and urgency (Anastasio & Costa, 2004). Being aware that a sexualized image activates an objectification of the person portrayed is highly relevant, particularly when the person reported is a victim of crime. Thus, along with other studies conducted on female objectification (Bernard, Gervais, Allen, Delmée, & Klein, 2015; Bernard, Loughnan, *et al.*, 2015; Gervais *et al.*, 2013; Heflick, Goldenberg, Cooper, & Puvia, 2011; Loughnan *et al.*, 2010, 2013; Vaes *et al.*, 2011), our findings can be a stimulus to reflect upon the role of mass media in sustaining a cultural model that legitimates and tolerates gender violence and discourages helping victims. Considering the results of the present study, this phenomenon is particularly worrisome for the implications it may involve in public perception of IPV and real-life victims.

The findings of the current studies may additionally have implications for interventions aimed to reduce IPV. An Italian national survey conducted in 2014 (Istat, 2015) showed that although 31.5% of women had faced at least one episode of IPV in their life, only 11.8% of incidents were reported to the authorities. This survey suggests moreover a significant

increase in the knowledge and comprehension of the phenomenon with regard to the previous 2006 national survey (Istat, 2006): Women were more willing to consider IPV as a crime (from 14.3% to 29.6%), to seek help from specialist centres (from 2.4% to 4.9%), and to report to the authorities (from 6.7% to 11.8%). Nevertheless, this leaves 88.2% of cases unreported. This combination of severity, prevalence, and underreporting makes understanding the factors that help sustain IPV within our communities a pressing concern. Approaches to reducing IPV have been multifactorial; assisting the victims, legislating against the perpetrators, and raising awareness and support in the community (for a review, see Whitaker & Lutzker, 2009). Our findings are a step forward for public awareness campaigns, considering willingness to help may provide important insight for those who study IPV and violence against women, in order to understand and promote bystanders' behaviour in such cases. On the one hand, campaigns could focus on combating the idea that women elicit violence from men through their appearance, challenging the idea that they 'ask for it'. Alternatively, they could focus on the idea that women suffer greatly from IPV; they are in emotional and physical pain regardless of their appearance (Robert, Paterson, & Francas, 1999). Although multiple factors will determine the success of these campaigns, if a perceived lack of women's ability to suffer underlies reduced willingness to help victims, making this suffering highly salient may be a powerful technique. Therefore, emphasizing the humanity of female victims could be a key

factor. Thus, further interventions could aim at reducing the dehumanization of sexualized targets highlighting target personality (Bernard, Gervais, *et al.*, 2015). Moreover, since previous research (Puvia & Vaes, 2013) has shown that self-objectification affects the tendency to dehumanize sexualized targets, interventions should be aimed to reduce this psychological condition.

Another important contribution of the present research regards the factors that affect the way that others react towards victimized women. Previous research has shown that women's intentions of reporting an episode of violence to the police increase when they consult with others (Paul, Zinzow, McCauley, Kilpatrick, & Resnick, 2014). Our research highlights how the sexualized appearance of the victim can undermine helping in cases of domestic violence. It is worth noting that women victims of IPV are often obsessively controlled by their 'jealous' partners for their attire. As a consequence, when they separate (and decide to seek professional help), they often tend to affirm their regained freedom through the choice of a heavy makeup or particularly sexy clothing (Magionami, 2013). For this reason, our results may provide useful indications to social services professionals who work with battered women, highlighting the pitfalls of considering their clients less credible or more negatively for their liberated appearance.

Conclusion

Intimate partner violence is a pervasive and damaging phenomenon

in many nations. It represents a widespread, preventable, and fundamentally social problem for women and understanding factors that impede others helping IPV victims is important. Our results indicate that sexualization represents a barrier, reducing willingness to help by making victims appear lesser moral patients. Although people have long debated the standards an entity must meet to be deemed morally relevant (Goodpaster, 1978), it is without debate that objects do not meet these standards. When sexualized and objectified, people can be violated because they are perceived as lacking feelings and experience (Nussbaum, 1995; Papadaki, 2007). Ultimately, increasing people's willingness to help others may require emphasizing the human status of the victims.

References

Abbey, A., Cozzarelli, C., McLaughlin, K., & Harnish, R. J. (1987). The
   effects of clothing and dyad sex composition on perceptions of sexual
   intent: Do women and men evaluate these cues differently. *Journal of
   Applied Social Psychology*, *17*, 108–126.
   doi:10.1111/j.15591816.1987.tb00304.x

American Psychological Association (2007). *Report of the APA task
   force on the sexualisation of girls*. Washington, DC: Author.

Anastasio, P. A., & Costa, D. M. (2004). Twice hurt: How newspaper
   coverage may reduce may reduce empathy and engender blame for
   female victims of crime. *Sex Roles*, *51*, 535–542. doi:10.1007/s11199-
   004-5463-7

Archer, J. (2006). Cross-cultural differences in physical aggression
   between partners: A social-role analysis. *Personality and Social
   Psychology Review*, *10*, 133–153. doi:10.1207/s15327957pspr
   1002_31

Baldry, A., Pacilli, M. G., & Pagliaro, S. (2015). She's not a person.. .She's
   just a woman! Infra- humanization and intimate partner violence.
   Journal of Interpersonal Violence, *30*, 1567– 1582.
   doi:10.1177/0886260514540801

Baldry, A. C., & Pagliaro, S. (2014). Helping victims of intimate partner
   violence: The influence of group norms among lay people and the
   police. *Psychology of Violence*, *4*, 334–347. doi:10.1037/a0034844

Bastian, B., Laham, S., Wilson, S., Haslam, N., & Koval, P. (2011).
Blaming, praising, and protecting our humanity: The implications of
everyday dehumanization for judgments of moral status. *British
Journal of Social Psychology*, *50*, 469–483.
doi:10.1348/014466610X521383

Bastian, B., & Loughnan, S. (2016). Resolving the meat-paradox: A
motivational account of morally troublesome behavior and its
maintenance. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*. Advance
online publication. doi:1088868316647562

Bentham, J. (1789/2011). *An introduction to the principles of morals and
legislation*. London, UK: British Library.

Bernard, P., Gervais, S., 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

Bernard, P., Gervais, S. J., Allen, J., Delmée, A., & Klein, O. (2015). From sex objects to human beings masking sexual body parts and humanization as moderators to women's objectification. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, *39*, 432–446. doi:10.1177/0361684315580125

Bernard, P., Loughnan, S., Marchal, C., Godart, A., & Klein, O. (2015). The exonerating effect of sexual objectification: Sexual objectification decreases rapist blame in a stranger rape context. *Sex Roles*, *72*, 499–508. doi:10.1007/s11199-015-0482-0

Brambilla, M., Rusconi, P., Sacchi, S., & Cherubini, P. (2011). Looking for honesty: The primary role of morality (vs. sociability and competence) in information gathering. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, *41*, 135–143. doi:10.1002/ejsp.744

Burt, M. R. (1980). Cultural myths and supports for rape. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *38*, 217–230. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.38.2.217

Cahoon, D. D., & Edmonds, E. M. (1989). Male–female estimates of opposite-sex first impressions concerning females' clothing styles. *Bulletin of the Psychonomic Society*, *27*, 280–281. doi:10.3758/BF03334607

Carlin, D. B., & Winfrey, K. L. (2009). Have you come a long way, baby? Hillary Clinton, Sarah Palin, and sexism in 2008 campaign coverage. *Communication Studies*, *60*, 326–343. doi:10.1080/

10510970903109904

Chen, Z., Teng, F., & Zhang, H. (2013). Sinful flesh: Sexual objectification threatens women's moral self. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *49*, 1042–1048. doi:10.1016/j.jesp.2013. 07.008

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

Eckes, T. (2002). Paternalistic and envious gender stereotypes: Testing predictions from the stereotype content model. *Sex Roles*, *47*, 99–114. doi:10.1023/A:1021020920715

Fiske, S. T., Cuddy, A. J. C., Glick, P., & Xu, J. (2002). A model of (often mixed) stereotype content: Competence and warmth respectively follow from perceived status and competition. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *82*, 878–902. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.82.6.878

Funk, M. E., & Coker, C. R. (2016). She's hot, for a politician: The impact of objectifying commentary on perceived credibility of female candidates. *Communication Studies*, *67*, 1–19. doi:10.1080/ 10510974.2016.1196380

Gervais, S. J., Bernard, P., Klein, O., & Allen, J. (2013). Toward a unified theory of objectification and dehumanization. In S. J. Gervais (Ed.), *Objectification and (De)humanization* (pp. 1–23). New York, NY: Springer.

Gervais, S. J., Vescio, T. K., & Allen, J. (2012). When are people

interchangeable sexual objects? The effect of gender and body type on

sexual fungibility. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, *51*, 499–513.

doi:10.1111/j.2044-8309.2010.02016.x

Gervais, S. J., Vescio, T. K., Maass, A., Förster, J., & Suitner, C. (2012).

Seeing women as objects: The sexual body part recognition bias.

European Journal of Social Psychology, *42*, 743–753.

doi:10.1002/ejsp.1890

Gill, R. (2008). Empowerment/sexism: Figuring female sexual agency in

contemporary advertising.

Feminism & Psychology, *18*, 35–60. doi:10.1177/0959353507084950

Glick, P., & Fiske, S. T. (1996). The ambivalent sexism inventory:

Differentiating hostile and benevolent sexism. *Journal of Personality*

and Social Psychology, *70*, 491–512. doi:10.1037/ 0022-

3514.70.3.491

Goodpaster, K. E. (1978). On being morally considerable. *The Journal of*

Philosophy, *75*, 308–325. doi:10.2307/2025709

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– 1220.

doi:10.1037/a0025883

Gray, K., & Wegner, D. M. (2009). Moral typecasting: Divergent

perceptions of moral agents and thes. *Journal of Personality and*

Social Psychology, *96*, 505–520. doi:10.1037/a0013748

Haj-Yahia, M. M. (2005). Can people's patriarchal ideology predict their

    beliefs about wife abuse?The case of Jordanian men. *Journal of*

    Community Psychology, *33*, 545–567. doi:10.1002/ jcop.20068

Haj-Yahia, M. M., Sousa, C., Alnabilsy, R., & Elias, H. (2015). The

    influence of Palestinian physicians' patriarchal ideology and exposure to

    family violence on their beliefs about wife beating. *Journal of Family*

    Violence, *30*, 263–276. doi:10.1007/s10896-015-9671-4

Hatton, E., & Trautner, M. N. (2011). Equal opportunity objectification?

    The sexualization of menand women on the cover of Rolling Stone.

    Sexuality & Culture, *15*, 256–278. doi:10.1007/ s12119-011-9093-2

Hayes, A. F. (2013). *Introduction to mediation, moderation, and*

    conditional process analysis: A regression based approach. New

    York: The Guilford Press.

Heflick, N., & Goldenberg, J. (2009). Objectifying Sarah Palin: Evidence

    that objectification causeswomen to be perceived as less competent

    and less fully human. *Journal of Experimental SocialPsychology*, *45*,

    598–601. doi:10.1016/j.jesp.2009.02.008

Heflick, N., Goldenberg, J., Cooper, D., & Puvia, E. (2011). From

    women to objects: Appearance focus, target gender, and perceptions

    of warmth, morality and competence. *Journal ofExperimental Social*

    Psychology, *47*, 572–581. doi:10.1016/j.jesp.2010.12.020

Holland, E., & Haslam, N. (2013). Worth the weight: The objectification

of overweight versus thintargets. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, *37*, 572–581. doi:10.1177/0361684312474800

ISTAT (2006). *La violenza contro le donne*. Indagine multiscopo sulle famiglie "Sicurezza delle donne". Roma, Italy: Author.

ISTAT (2015). *La violenza contro le donne dentro e fuori la famiglia*. Indagine multiscopo sulle famiglie "Sicurezza delle donne". Roma, Italy: Author.

Leach, C. W., Ellemers, N., & Barreto, M. (2007). Group virtue: The importance of morality (vs. competence and sociability) in the positive evaluation of in-groups. *Journal of Personality andSocial Psychology*, *93*, 234–249. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.93.2.234

Loughnan, S., Bastian, B., & Haslam, N. (2014). The psychology of eating animals. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, *23*, 104–108. doi:10.1177/0963721414525781

Loughnan, S., Haslam, N., Murnane, T., Vaes, J., Reynolds, C., & Suitner, C. (2010). Objectificationleads to depersonalization: The denial of mind and moral concern to objectified others. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, *40*, 709–717. doi:10.1002/ejsp.755

Loughnan, S., & Pacilli, M. G. (2014). Seeing (and treating) others as sexual objects: Towards a more complete mapping of sexual objectification. *Testing Pyschometrics and Methodology in Applied Psychology*, *21*, 1–17. doi:10.4473/TPM21.3.6

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

MacKinnon, C. (2006). *Are women human?*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Magionami, L. (2013). Il lavoro con le donne vittime di violenza [*Working with women victim of violence*]. Symposium conducted at the meeting on "The psychosocial aspects of domestic violence", University of Perugia, 9 maggio 2013.

Majdandzic, J., Bauer, H., Windischberger, C., Moser, E., Engl, E., & Lamm, C. (2012). The human factor: Behavioral and neural correlates of humanized perception in moral decision making. *PLoS One*, *7*, e47698. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0047698

Miller, S. L., & Maner, J. K. (2008). Coping with romantic betrayal: Sex differences in responses to partner infidelity. *Evolutionary Psychology*, *3*, 413–426. doi:147470490800600305

Morris, K. L., & Goldenberg, J. L. (2015). Women, objects, and animals: Differentiating between sex- and beauty-based objectification. *Revue Internationale de Psychologie Sociale*, *28*, 15–38.

Nussbaum, M. (1995). Objectification. *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, *24*, 249–291. doi:10.1111/ j.1088-4963.1995.tb00032.x

Pacilli, M. G., Roccato, M., Pagliaro, S., & Russo, S. (2016). From political opponents to enemies? The role of perceived moral distance in the

animalistic dehumanization of the political outgroup. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, *19*, 360–373. doi:10.1177/1368430215590490

Pacilli, M. G., Tomasetto, C., & Cadinu, M. (2016). Exposure to sexualized advertisements disrupts children's math performance by reducing working memory. *Sex Roles*, *74*, 389–398. doi:10.1007/s11199-016-0581-6

Pagliaro, S., Brambilla, M., Sacchi, S., D'Angelo, M., & Ellemers, N. (2013). Initial impressions determine behaviours: Morality predicts the willingness to help newcomers. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *117*, 37–44. doi:10.1007/s10551-012-1508-y

Papadaki, E. (2007). Sexual objectification: From Kant to contemporary feminism. *Contemporary Political Theory*, *6*, 330–348. doi:10.1057/palgrave.cpt.9300282

Paul, L. A., Zinzow, H. M., McCauley, J. J., Kilpatrick, D. G., & Resnick, H. S. (2014). Does encouragement by others increase rape reporting? Findings from a national sample of women. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, *38*, 222–232. doi:10.1177/0361684313501999

Puvia, E., & Vaes, J. (2013). Being a body: Women's appearance related self-views and their dehumanization of sexually objectified female targets. *Sex Roles*, *68*, 484–495. doi:10.1007/s11199-012-0255-y

Richardson, D., & Campbell, J. L. (1982). Alcohol and rape: The effect of alcohol on attributions of blame for rape. *Personality and Social*

Psychology Bulletin, *8*, 468–476. doi:10.1177/ 0146167282083013

Riva, P., Brambilla, M., & Vaes, J. (2016). Bad guys suffer less (social
pain): Moral status influences judgements of others' social suffering.
British Journal of Social Psychology, *55*, 88–108.
doi:10.1111/bjso.12114

Robert, J. D., Paterson, D., & Francas, M. (1999). Targeting male
perpetrators of intimate partner violence: Western Australia's
"Freedom from Fear" campaign. *Social Marketing Quarterly*, *5*, 127–
144. doi:10.1080/15245004.1999.9961076

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*, 734–746.
doi:10.1177/0146167212436401

Sims, C. M., Noel, N. E., & Maisto, S. A. (2007). Rape blame as a
function of alcohol presence and resistance type. *Addictive Behaviors*,
32, 2766–2775. doi:10.1016/j.addbeh.2007.04.013

Singer, P. (1979). *Practical ethics*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge
University Press.

Smolak, L., Murnen, S. K., & Myers, T. A. (2014). Sexualizing the self:
What college women and men think about and do to be "sexy".
Psychology of Women Quarterly, *38*, 379–397. doi:10.1177/
0361684314524168

Tabachnick, B. G., & Fidell, L. S. (2007). *Using multivariate statistics*

(5th ed.). Needham Height, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Tabachnick, B. G., & Fidell, L. S. (2013). *Using multivariate statistics* (6th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.

Vaes, J., Loughnan, S., & Puvia, E. (2014). The inhuman body; When sexual objectification becomes dehumanizing. In P. Bain, J. Vaes & J-Ph. Leyens (Eds.), *Humanness and dehumanization* (pp. 186–204). New York, NY: Taylor and Francis.

Vaes, J., Paladino, P., & Puvia, E. (2011). Are sexualized women complete human beings? Why men and women dehumanize sexually objectified women. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, *41*, 774–785. doi:10.1002/ejsp.824

Valor-Segura, I., Expósito, F., & Moya, M. (2011). Victim blaming and exoneration of the perpetrator in domestic violence: The role of beliefs in a just world and ambivalent sexism. *The Spanish Journal of Psychology*, *14*, 195–206. doi:10.5209/rev_SJOP.2011.v14.n1.17

Vandello, J. A., & Cohen, D. (2003). Male honor and female fidelity: Implicit cultural scripts that perpetuate domestic violence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *84*, 997–1010.

Waytz, A., Gray, K., Epley, N., & Wegner, D. (2010). Causes and consequences of mind perception.

Trends in Cognitive Science, *14*, 383–388. doi:10.1016/j.tics.2010.05.006

Whitaker, D. J., & Lutzker, J. R. (2009). *Preventing partner violence: Foundations, intervention, and issues*. Washington, DC: American

Psychological Association.

WHO (2013). *Global and regional estimates of violence against women: Prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non partner sexual violence*. Geneva, Switzerland: Author.

Yi, K. A., & Straus, M. A. (1990). Patriarchy and violence against wives: The impact of structural and normative factors. In M. A. Straus & R. J. Gelles (Eds.), *Physical violence in American families* (pp. 383–399). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction

Zanardo, L. (2010). *Il corpo delle donne* [The body of women]. Milano, Italy: Feltrinelli. Zurbriggen, E. L., & Roberts, T. A. (Eds.) (2013). *The sexualization of girls and girlhood: Causes,consequences, and resistance*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Footnote

[1]The fact that the non-sexualized image depicted the victim with an alcoholic drink raises a potential confound; the presence of alcohol cues undermines women's status as victims when they have been assaulted (Burt, 1980; Richardson & Campbell, 1982; Sims, Noel, & Maisto, 2007). While acknowledging this potential confound, we hypothesize that people will view this controlwoman as more moral, more worthy of moral concern, and help her more. In effect, any influence of the alcohol prime would work against our hypotheses.

[2] The crucial mediation pattern did not change according to the inclusion (vs. exclusion) of our covariates

Appendix :

Study 1

Anna G. is a 35-year old woman who works at the municipality of her hometown. For 8 years, she has been married to Luciano F., 41 years old, employed at a well-known local company. On Tuesday evening, Luciano F. came back home in the grip of an evident agitation, accusing Anna G. to have been unfaithful to him several times. Shocked, the woman repeated she had not been unfaithful to her husband, who, in response, beat her repeatedly, making her scream several times until she lost consciousness, as witnessed by their neighbours.

Study 2

Admission of infidelity

Anna G. is a 35-year old woman who works at the municipality of her hometown. For 8 years, she has been married to Luciano F., 41 years old, employed at a well-known local company. On Tuesday evening, Luciano F. came back home in the grip of an evident agitation, accusing Anna G. to have been unfaithful to him several times. Anna who had been unfaithful to her husband, admitted shocked that he was right. Her husband, in response, beat her repeatedly, making her scream several times until she lost conscious- ness, as witnessed by their neighbours.

Non-admission of infidelity

Anna G. is a 35-year old woman who works at the municipality of her hometown. For eight years, she has been married to Luciano F., 41 years old, employed at a well-known local company. On Tuesday evening, Luciano F. came back home in the grip of an evident agitation, accusing Anna G. to have been unfaithful to him several times. Anna who had not been unfaithful to her husband repeated shocked that he was wrong. Her husband, in response, beat her repeatedly, making her scream several times until she lost conscious- ness, as witnessed by their neighbours.

Authors Note: Translated from Italian

Figure A1. Sexualized condition, Study 1, Study 2.

Figure A2. Non-sexualized condition, Study 1.

Figure A3. Non-sexualized condition, Study 2.