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How Sexual Objectification Generates Dehumanization in Western and Eastern Cultures

A Comparison Between Belgium and Thailand

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Abstract. Ever since Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) proposed objectification theory, research on self-objectification and – by extension – other-objectification has experienced a considerable expansion. However, most of the studies on sexual objectification have been conducted solely in Western populations. This study investigates whether the effect of target sexualization on social perception differs as a function of culture (Western vs. Eastern). Specifically, we asked a Western sample (Belgian, $N = 62$) and a Southeast Asian sample (Thai, $N = 98$) to rate sexualized versus nonsexualized targets. We found that sexual objectification results in dehumanization in both Western (Belgium) and Eastern (Thailand) cultures. Specifically, participants from both countries attributed less competence and less agency to sexualized than to nonsexualized targets, and they reported that they would administer more intense pain to sexualized than to nonsexualized targets. Thus, building on past research, this study suggests that the effect of target sexualization on dehumanization is a more general rather than a culture-specific phenomenon.

Keywords: sexual objectification, sex, cultural relativism, mind attribution, moral status, dehumanization

Sexual objectification implies treating or considering a person as a sex object – as a body to consume (Bartky, 1990). This construct is being discussed in the media as well as in heated debates among contemporary feminists (e.g., Wolf, 1991). In the Western world, in particular, one can find many examples of the instrumentalization of bodies. In the media and advertising especially, the appearance industry imposes appearance norms by conveying sexualized, idealized, and stereotyped images of women and men that deeply influence the public's attitudes toward the body (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). *Objectification theory*, proposed by Fredrickson and Roberts (1997), addresses the effect of objectification on women's mental and physical health. According to this theory, experiences of sexual objectification (e.g., exposure to sexually objectifying media) lead women to engage in self-objectification (i.e., focus more on their physical appearance than on their competence), which, in turn, generates body shame and impairs their mental health (see Moradi & Huang, 2008, for a review). According to Bartky (1990), objectification occurs when women are perceived and/or treated as if they were reducible to a mere body stripped of their personhood. More precisely, objectification occurs "when a person's bodily parts or functions are separated from her personality and reduced to the status of mere instruments or else regarded as if they were capable of representing her"

(Bartky, 1990, p. 26; see also LaCroix & Pratto, 2015, for a more extended taxonomy of objectification phenomena).

Sexual objectification implies that the objectified other is seen or treated as a body or body parts instead of as a fully human being. This notion is at the crux of the works of many philosophers who have theorized about objectification. According to Kant (1797), humanness lies in the fact that human beings possess both a body and a mind – and treating someone as fully human implies that these two dimensions not be separated from one another. Consequently, when a person is reduced to a mere body stripped from her personhood, this person becomes a sex object in the eyes of the objectifier. This view is also conveyed in the influential work of Nussbaum (1995), who conceptualized the objectification of others as morally problematic when a person is appraised as if she were lacking in agency. In sum, sexual objectification occurs when a person is depicted in a sexualized way and perceived as possessing less humanness and mind.

With respect to humanness and objectification, researchers have found that focusing on the physical appearance of a woman is related to dehumanization: Participants asked to focus on the appearance of a woman reported a greater mechanistic dehumanization of the woman (i.e., denying human nature to others, representing them as objects, as automata, or reducing

them to machines; Haslam, 2006; Haslam, Kashima, Loughnan, Shi, & Suitner, 2008) than those focusing on her personality (Heflick & Goldenberg, 2009). Appearance-focus (vs. personality-focus) participants also perceived female targets as possessing less competence, warmth, and morality (Heflick & Goldenberg, 2009; Heflick, Goldenberg, Cooper, & Puvia, 2011). Research participants were also slower to associate sexualized targets with words related to humans than with words related to animals (Vaes, Paladino, & Puvia, 2011).

As for the attribution of mind, Gray, Gray, and Wegner (2007) showed that people spontaneously ascribed mind to others along two key dimensions: agency and experience. Agency relates to the capacity to act intentionally and experience refers to the capacity to feel. These two dimensions of mind perception were found to be related to perceptions of moral agency (i.e., the capacity to act morally) and moral patiency (deserving of moral treatment and of not being harmed), respectively (Gray et al., 2007). Loughnan et al. (2010) found that participants rated sexualized (vs. nonsexualized) targets as possessing less agency (for similar results using an implicit measure of agency, see Cikara, Erberhardt, & Fiske, 2011). They also attributed less patiency to sexualized targets: Participants explicitly reported that sexualized targets deserved less moral treatment, and that it would be less unpleasant to harm sexualized targets compared to nonsexualized targets. This diminished attribution of moral agency to sexualized targets has critical implications in the way these targets are perceived in the context of rape perception (Bernard, Loughnan, Marchal, Godart, & Klein, 2015; Loughnan, Pina, Vasquez, & Puvia, 2013). Loughnan et al. (2013) found that the effect of sexualization on the perceived suffering of a rape victim was mediated by moral patiency: The rape victim was perceived as having suffered less in the sexualization condition than in the nonsexualization condition, and this effect was explained by the fact that participants reported that, for instance, they would feel bad to a lesser extent if they heard that the victim had been treated unfairly or if they heard that the victim had been hurt. In this paper, we focused on whether target sexualization modulates participants' attributions of competence and agency, and the intensity of pain participants would administer to sexualized versus nonsexualized targets.

Culture and Objectification

Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) acknowledge the cultural underpinnings of their theory and exclusively consider objectification in the Western cultural context. Is sexual objectification pervasive across cultures? And are sexually objectified targets dehumanized to the same extent in different or Eastern cultural backgrounds? Although prior research has documented the effect of sexual objectification on social perception (e.g., Bernard,

Gervais, Allen, Campomizzi, & Klein, 2012; Bernard, Gervais, Allen, Delmée, & Klein, 2015, Loughnan et al., 2010, 2013), very little is known regarding the moderating effect of culture on the objectification of others. A notable exception comes from Loughnan et al. (2015), who investigated the role of culture in sexual objectification by comparing Western samples (from Australia, Italy, the USA, the UK) with non-Western samples (from India, Pakistan, Japan). The participants were asked to evaluate the target's personality on the basis of 20 traits and, subsequently, to examine how uniquely human each of these traits were. The participants were also asked to evaluate the targets' mind on two dimensions: Rational/Agency (i.e., items such as planning, reasoning) and Emotional/Experience (i.e., items such as passion, emotion). Target sexualization diminished attribution of rational mind (Agency) in three of the seven samples (the UK, Australia, Pakistan) whereas attribution of emotional mind (Experience) did not differ as a function of target sexualization. Across cultures, perceivers attributed less moral status to sexualized targets, that is, sexualized targets were viewed as being less deserving of moral treatment. For example, people were more willing to inflict harm on them. Although these findings did not reveal a clear pattern, the effects were mostly independent of participant or target sex. However, the impact of target sexualization on mind attribution of sexual targets was present but stronger in the Western (e.g., Australia, the USA) than in the non-Western (e.g., India, Japan) countries studied by Loughnan et al. (2015).

While the Loughnan et al. (2015) study offered a welcome foray into the cultural dimension of other-objectification, it had an important limitation: The targets used were always from the participants' own culture (i.e., Westerners only saw Western targets and Easterners only saw Eastern targets). It was, therefore, not possible to establish whether the effect should be attributed to the participant's and/or to the target's culture. This is a significant concern, given that the stereotypes associated with specific social groups often cross cultural boundaries (see Cuddy et al., 2009). For example, veiled women are perceived as being submissive and oppressed in Western cultures (Hoodfar, 1993). Conversely, Western women are often perceived as being sexually promiscuous in non-Western cultures (Calogero, Boroughs, & Thompson, 2007). To disentangle the observer from the target effects, we believe it is necessary to manipulate these two factors orthogonally.

In the present research, we sought to consider the effect of target sexualization (focus on a sexually objectified target vs. a nonsexualized target) on dehumanization in a Western versus Eastern culture. Are the negative effect of target sexualization on attribution of mind and moral status more acute among the Westerner (Belgian) as compared to the Easterner (Thai)? Are these effects a function of sex and nationality, considered at both the perceiver and the target level? The present study seeks to answer these questions.

To fulfill this goal, we decided to consider the impact of a

target's sex and nationality in two cultural contexts: a Western context (Belgium) and an Eastern context (Thailand).

While ample research on objectification has been conducted in Belgium (Bernard et al., 2012; Bernard, Gervais et al., 2015; Bernard, Loughnan et al., 2015), very little is known about objectification in Thailand. In terms of its cultural and religious background, Thailand could hardly be more different from Belgium. For example, Thailand is a deeply religious country, with 93% of the population practicing Theravada (RDI; Religious Diversity Index from the Pew Research Center on Religion and Public Life, 2010). Belgians are much more diverse religiously: 50% of Belgians report being Catholic, 41% atheist or without religious affiliation, and 5% Muslim (Voyé, Dobbelaere, & Abts, 2012). According to the World Value Survey (Inglehart, 1997, 2004), which groups countries according to people's values along two main dimensions of human orientation, in the Thai culture, self-expression values are more dominant (e.g., public expression, aspiration to liberty) than survival values (e.g., physical security) – and traditional values (e.g., deference to authority, traditional family values) more dominant than secular/relational values. While Thais obtain average scores on the two dimensions, the Belgians' prioritize self-expression values and secular/rational values (Inglehart & Welzel, 2010a, 2010b). It is easy to list the many differences between these two cultural contexts. In view of these many differences, it is an ideal testing ground for considering the generalizability of the effects of sexualization on social perception in a cross-cultural arena. In contrast, if differences are found, their source would deserve further investigation.

The principal novelty of this study lies in the orthogonal manipulation (in line with the recommendations made by Judd, Park, Ryan, Brauer, & Kraus, 1995, in stereotyping research) of observer's nationality and target's nationality to highlight the effects of the target's and the participant's cultures and thereby address a limitation of Loughnan et al.'s (2015) study. Specifically, we present both Eastern and Western targets to Thai and Belgian participants. This approach allows us to differentiate between observer and target effects. Moreover, we consider the participant's and the target's sex. Research shows that both men and women objectify others (Strelan & Hargreaves, 2005), with a few studies reporting gender differences in terms of magnitudes (Puvia & Vaes, 2013; Vaes et al., 2011). However, most studies fail to reveal any differences as a function of the observer's sex (e.g., Bernard et al., 2012; Bernard, Gervais et al., 2015; Bernard, Loughnan et al., 2015; Gervais, Bernard, & Riemer, 2015; Gervais, Vescio, Förster, Maass, & Suitner 2012; Loughnan et al., 2010, 2013, 2015). It is well established that sexism is regularly present in women's lives and is encountered more often by women than men (Swim, Hyers, Cohen, & Ferguson, 2001). However, empirical studies yield mixed results in terms of the influence of target sex on other-objectification: Some studies have found differences, with females being more likely to be objectified (e.g., Bernard et al., 2012; Bernard, Gervais et al., 2015; Bernard, Loughnan et al., 2015; Heflick et al.,

2011), and others have not (e.g., Loughnan et al., 2010, 2015). Thus, we do not have strong a priori assumptions regarding the effect of participant's and target's sex, respectively.

In view of the crucial dearth of studies in the current literature analyzing the influence of sexual objectification on dehumanization in Eastern countries, with the notable exception of Loughnan et al.'s (2015) study, a comparison between Belgium and Thailand constitutes an opportunity to test cultural differences in the impact of sexualization on dehumanization in a Western versus an Eastern context.

Summary of Hypotheses

We propose that target sexualization is associated with diminished attributions of competence and agency and with increased intensity of pain participants would inflict (Hypothesis 1). Second, we postulate that this effect of target sexualization on dehumanization is moderated by culture. Specifically, we hypothesize that the effect of target sexualization on the dependent variables will be more acute among Belgian as opposed to Thai participants (Hypothesis 2). Third, due to conflicting findings in the literature, we do not have a strong a priori hypothesis regarding the moderating role of the target's sex. Nevertheless, we examined whether the target's sex moderates the effect of sexualization on the dependent variables. Hypothesis 3 is based on the assumption that Western women are perceived as being more promiscuous than Eastern women. Hence, we expect that the impact of sexualization on the dependent variables will be stronger for Western than for Eastern targets, but especially when the latter are female.

Method

Participants

A group of 160 people participated in this study: 62 Belgians (35 female and 27 male) and 98 Thais (67 female and 31 male), with 58 male and 102 female participants in the overall sample. Participant age ranged from 18 to 54 years ($M = 28.31$; $SD = 8.97$). The participants were mostly students (81.53%). Only participants who indicated that they were Belgian, French-speaking, lived in Belgium, and only Thais who lived in Thailand and who indicated that they were adults, were retained in the sample. Supervised by at least one of the authors, the Thai participants were recruited at both Chiang Mai University and Chulalongkorn University, while the Belgian participants were recruited at the Université Libre de Bruxelles. We also posted the online survey on students' work groups associated with

their university to collect more data. The participants completed the questionnaire voluntarily and without compensation.

Procedure

The participants completed a single online questionnaire. All questionnaires were translated and back-translated into the language at the site of testing. The standard French version was employed in Belgium. The Thai translation from the Standard English version was used in Thailand. The questionnaire booklet was divided into two sections: In the first section, the participants were to indicate their age, sex, city of residence, profession, and date of birth. The second part of the questionnaire booklet consisted of the presentation of images of Western and Eastern sexualized versus nonsexualized male and female targets. After the presentation of each image, participants were required to assess the individual along four dimensions of person perception.

Images

A total of eight pictures depicting four nonfamous females and four nonfamous males were selected from freely available online sources (the images are available here: https://osf.io/djex7/). The photographs depicting the Western targets were taken from the study by Loughnan et al. (2010) and differed with respect to sexualization, as intended (see Loughnan et al., 2010, for a similar procedure). The photographs depicting the Eastern targets were matched by the authors for orientation, image backgrounds, and size. The present work aims to investigate the consequences that a narrowed focus on a person's physical appearance might have in human terms. Thus, within each gender category, half of the targets were depicted in a sexualized way (i.e., narrowed focus on a target's physical appearance), while the other half was depicted in a nonsexualized way. As in Loughnan et al.'s (2010) study, sexualization was manipulated using attire. Sexually objectified men and women were depicted in swimwear; nonsexually objectified men and women were depicted in casual clothes. The images displayed models of two different nationalities. Specifically, four images displayed Western male and female sexualized and nonsexualized targets, while the other four images displayed Eastern male and female sexualized and nonsexualized targets. An objective criterion was used to select the pictures. According to the method used by Archer, Iritani, Kimes, and Barrios (1983), the face-ism index (FI) was calculated as the ratio between the distance from the top of the head to the lowest part of the chin and the distance from the top of the head to the lowest visible part of the body. Both scores were measured with a standard ruler for every picture printed on a sheet of paper. The index can range from 0 (*no face is shown at all*)

to 1 (*only the face is shown*). The greater the index, the more the face is used to represent the person. A low index indicates that the face is minimized. As a result, the FI was matched for the sexualized (FI = .45) and nonsexualized images (FI = .5). However, the FI could be considered a proxy for sexual objectification, given that no information is conveyed about how the targets are represented. The participants were randomly assigned to view either images of sexually objectified and nonsexually objectified Eastern and Western men or images of sexually objectified and nonsexually objectified Eastern and Western women.

Questionnaire

The participants were asked to complete several scales that assess the extent to which they attribute competence and agency to the targets, and the intensity of pain they would inflict on the targets.

Competence

The participants rated the target's intelligence quotient (IQ), using a Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*intellectually deficient*) to 7 (*gifted*). To assess the attribution of competence, the participants were asked to assess the target's competence at performing four different jobs (i.e., lawyer, manager, stockbroker, scientist). Participants rated how competently they believed the target could perform each job (1 = *extremely incompetently*; 7 = *extremely competently*). In the present study, the scale showed moderate to good reliability (Cronbach's α = .56–.81). Four competence indices were calculated, based on the participants' mean level of attribution of competence to sexualized Western (*M* = 3.86, *SD* = 1.1) and sexualized Eastern targets (*M* = 3.78, *SD* = 1.14), and to nonsexualized Western (*M* = 4.29, *SD* = 0.98) and nonsexualized Eastern targets (*M* = 4.09, *SD* = 0.99). The higher the values, the more participants evaluated the target as being competent at performing the four different jobs.

Agency

To assess moral agency, the participants completed a shorter version of the Agency Scale, which had been drawn from previous research (Gray et al., 2007). The participants rated the extent to which the target experiences seven mental states (i.e., communication, morality, planning, thought, memory, emotion recognition, self-control) using a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*). In the present research, the scale showed good internal reliability (Cronbach's α = .77–.91). Four agency indices were calculated, based on the participants' mean level of attribution of agency to sexualized Western (*M* = 4.55, *SD* = 0.89) and sexualized Eastern targets (*M* = 4.49, *SD* = 0.83), and to nonsexualized Western (*M* = 4.73, *SD* = 0.84) and nonsexualized Eastern targets (*M* = 4.88, *SD* = 0.75). Higher values indicated that participants evaluated the individual as possessing greater moral agency.[1]

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[1] The present study also included attributions of positive and negative primary and secondary emotions (Demoulin et al., 2004) to the targets under

Pain as an Indicator of Moral Agency

The moral status task involved rating the intensity of pain the participant would inflict on each target (see Gray & Wegner, 2009; Loughnan et al., 2010, for a similar procedure). The participants were told that the person portrayed in the picture had volunteered to participate in a study investigating the perception of pain. The participants were asked to indicate the intensity of electric shock they would administer to the person in the picture to inflict temporary pain (1 = *extremely weak;* 5 = *extremely intense*).[2]

Results

Preliminary Testing

We tested eight images on two dimensions: sexualization and nationality. In total, 137 people participated in the pilot study. All of the participants were French-speaking and lived in Belgium (101 female and 36 male). The participants' age ranged from 18 to 53 years ($M = 20.75$; $SD = 4.28$). The vast majority of them (over 95%) were students.

As for the dependent variables, the sexualization dimension involved a 5-item scale including items such as "To what extent is this person sexualized?" (1 = *not at all*; 7 = *very much so*). The internal consistency of each item was acceptable (Cronbach's α = .73–.79); hence, we averaged the scores for the five items to obtain one sexualization score for each picture. For the dimension of nationality, we created a Likert scale with the following question: "In your opinion, what is this person's ethnic origin?" (1 = *Caucasian (Western)*; 4 = *Eurasian (mixed origin)*; 7 = *Eastern*).

A 2 × 2 × 2 × 2 (Participant sex [male, female] × Target sex [male, female] × Target nationality [Western, Eastern] × Target sexualization [sexualized, nonsexualized]) mixed-model analysis of variance (ANOVA) with the last three variables as within-subject factors was conducted. Considering the mixed design of the present study, we used the generalized η_G^2 – as well as in the subsequent analysis – to measure effect size in line with the recommendations made by Olejnik and Algina (2003; see also Bakeman, 2005). As expected, we found a main effect of Target sexualization on sexualization ratings, $F(1, 135) = 671.01$, $p < .001$, $\eta_G^2 = .83$ with sexualized targets ($M_{\text{sexualized}} = 4.78$, $SD_{\text{sexualized}} = 1.03$) judged as being more sexualized than nonsexualized targets ($M_{\text{nonsexualized}} = 2.27$, $SD_{\text{nonsexualized}} = 0.78$). Looking at each picture separately, the 95% confidence interval (CI) of the means did not overlap between sexualized and nonsexualized targets.

The same 2 × 2 × 2 × 2 mixed-model ANOVA was employed to examine the nationality dimension. As expected, we observed a strong main effect of Target nationality $F(1, 135) = 2577.52$, $p < .001$, $\eta_G^2 = .95$ with Western targets viewed as having a Western origin ($M_{\text{female sexualized}} = 1.31$, $SD_{\text{female sexualized}} = 0.77$, $M_{\text{male sexualized}} = 1.76$, $SD_{\text{male sexualized}} = 0.99$, $M_{\text{female nonsexualized}} = 1.99$, $SD_{\text{female nonsexualized}} = 1.27$, and $M_{\text{male nonsexualized}} = 2.82$, $SD_{\text{male nonsexualized}} = 1.20$) and Eastern targets viewed as having an Asian origin ($M_{\text{female sexualized}} = 6.34$, $SD_{\text{female sexualized}} = 0.94$, $M_{\text{male sexualized}} = 6.31$, $SD_{\text{male sexualized}} = 0.97$, $M_{\text{female nonsexualized}} = 6.12$, $SD_{\text{female nonsexualized}} = 1.16$, and $M_{\text{male nonsexualized}} = 6.58$, $SD_{\text{male nonsexualized}} = 0.81$). In addition, inspecting each picture separately, the 95% CIs for means did not overlap between Western and Eastern targets.

In summary, the pretest of our picture set was conclusive, suggesting that we successfully manipulated sexualization and nationality.

Hypothesis Testing

Analysis Strategy

Unless otherwise indicated, we systematically relied on a 2 × 2 × 2 × 2 × 2 (Participant sex [male, female] × Target sex [male, female] × Participant nationality [Belgian, Thai] × Target nationality [Western, Eastern] × Target sexualization [sexualized, nonsexualized]) mixed-model ANOVA with the last two variables as within-subject factors. Given the number of effects tested by an ANOVA involving five independent variables and the risk of false positives (see Świątkowski & Dompnier, 2017), we exclusively focused on the effects involving Target sexualization. All of the significant effects are summarized in Table 1, and the corresponding means are reported in Tables 2, 3, and 4. For the same reasons, we always present the effects relevant to the hypotheses and those that are not separately (under the heading Additional Findings).

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investigation. However, the Thai version of the questionnaire had been translated from French into English and was then back-translated into Thai. This procedure presented problems. Indeed, between the Western and Eastern cultures, problems arose regarding the meaning and interpretation of the wording used for the different emotions. Thus, it was not possible to include this part of the research.

[2] A modification of the previous task was also used. Specifically, participants were asked to imagine that the person in the picture was a prisoner of war who possessed secret information. The participants had the opportunity to inflict temporary pain on the person in the picture and were to indicate how much pain they would inflict to induce him/her to reveal the information they required (1 = *extremely weak;* 5 = *extremely intense*). Since the two moral status tasks are poorly comparable with one another (e.g., in the electric shock task, the participant was told that the target had volunteered to participate in a perception of pain study, while in the prisoner task, the target's participation was not voluntary), we decided not to include the results of this version of the task in the Results section. In addition, a moral status task in which the target had autonomously decided to participate had already been used in a context in which the participants' perception was under investigation (e.g., see Loughnan et al., 2010). Note that, when included in the analysis, the prisoner's moral status task replicated the findings of the voluntary moral status task reported in the Results section.

Table 1. Overview of significant effects

Effect	$F(1, 152)$	p	η_G^2
Competence			
Main effect of Target sexualization	39.1	< .001	.04
Participant sex × Target sex × Target sexualization	4.9	.028	.005
Target nationality × Target sex × Target sexualization	5.33	.02	.004
Participant nationality × Target nationality × Target sexualization	5.33	.02	.004
Agency			
Main effect of Target sexualization	35.36	< .001	.03
Target sex × Participant sex × Target sexualization	11.01	.001	.01
Target nationality × Target sexualization	4.31	.04	.004
Pain			
Main effect of Target sexualization	9.59	.002	.006
Target nationality × Target sexualization	4.99	.03	.03
Participant nationality × Participant sex × Target sexualization	6.47	.01	.004

**Table 2.** Mean ratings (and standard deviations) of competence

	Female targets							
	Sexualized				Nonsexualized			
	Male participants		Female participants		Male participants		Female participants	
	Thais	Belgians	Thais	Belgians	Thais	Belgians	Thais	Belgians
Western targets	4.3 (.88)	3.55 (.72)	3.86 (1.34)	3.87 (1.03)	4.68 (.95)	4 (.48)	4.67 (.93)	3.99 (.84)
Eastern targets	4.19 (1.14)	3.54 (.76)	3.9 (1.22)	3.47 (1.02)	3.8 (1.18)	3.83 (.96)	4.08 (.96)	4 (.63)
Mean nationality	4.24 (1.01)	3.55 (.73)	3.88 (1.27)	3.67 (1.03)	4.23 (1.15)	3.92 (.74)	4.37 (.99)	3.99 (.73)
Mean participant sex	3.96 (.96)		3.8 (1.19)		4.11 (1.01)		4.24 (.92)	
Mean female targets	3.87 (1.1)				4.18 (.95)			
	Male targets							
Western targets	3.7 (1.03)	3.73 (.54)	3.92 (.99)	4.22 (.85)	4.57 (.96)	3.94 (.59)	4.21 (1.02)	4.31 (.39)
Eastern targets	3.98 (1.19)	3.56 (.97)	3.95 (.91)	3.93 (.65)	4.46 (.97)	4.21 (.41)	4.54 (.79)	4.08 (.61)
Mean nationality	3.84 (1.1)	3.64 (.77)	3.94 (.95)	4.08 (.76)	4.51 (.94)	4.08 (.52)	4.37 (.92)	4.2 (.52)
Mean participant sex	3.74 (.93)		3.98 (.89)		4.28 (.77)		4.31 (.81)	
Mean male targets	3.9 (.91)				4.3 (.8)			
Mean all sexualization	3.89 (.86)				4.24 (.68)			

Table 3. Mean ratings (and standard deviations) of agency

	Female targets							
	Sexualized				Nonsexualized			
	Male participants		Female participants		Male participants		Female participants	
	Thais	Belgians	Thais	Belgians	Thais	Belgians	Thais	Belgians
Western targets	4.82 (.83)	4.04 (.69)	4.72 (1.13)	4.25 (.71)	4.74 (.72)	4.13 (.39)	5.17 (1.08)	4.64 (.76)
Eastern targets	4.89 (.73)	4.17 (.39)	4.68 (1.14)	4.11 (.45)	5.03 (.84)	4.59 (.73)	5.05 (.71)	4.87 (.7)
Mean nationality	4.86 (.77)	4.1 (.55)	4.7 (1.13)	4.18 (.59)	4.88 (.79)	4.36 (.62)	5.11 (.91)	4.75 (.73)
Mean participant sex	4.55 (.78)		4.51 (1)		4.67 (.76)		4.98 (.86)	
Mean female targets	4.53 (.91)				4.85 (.83)			
	Male targets							
Western targets	4.71 (1.09)	4.06 (.51)	4.72 (.84)	4.59 (.75)	5.06 (.75)	4.37 (.5)	4.68 (.88)	4.67 (.67)
Eastern targets	4.35 (1.09)	3.83 (.61)	4.77 (.64)	4.41 (.7)	4.89 (1.01)	4.38 (.47)	5.1 (.66)	4.56 (.74)
Mean nationality	4.53 (1.08)	3.95 (.56)	4.75 (.74)	4.5 (.72)	4.97 (.87)	4.38 (.48)	4.89 (.8)	4.62 (.69)
Mean participant sex	4.21 (.88)		4.67 (.74)		4.65 (.74)		4.8 (.78)	
Mean male targets	4.52 (.81)				4.75 (.77)			
Mean all sexualization	4.52 (.86)				4.8 (.8)			

Table 4. Mean ratings (and standard deviations) of intensity of inflicted pain

	Female targets							
	Sexualized				Nonsexualized			
	Male participants		Female participants		Male participants		Female participants	
	Thais	Belgians	Thais	Belgians	Thais	Belgians	Thais	Belgians
Western targets	2.92 (.96)	1.85 (.99)	2.66 (.87)	2.38 (1.1)	2.76 (.95)	1.77 (.88)	2.67 (.89)	2.35 (1.03)
Eastern targets	2.81 (1.03)	1.65 (.8)	2.66 (.98)	2.27 (.94)	2.37 (1.15)	1.69 (.75)	2.57 (.92)	2 (.85)
Mean nationality	2.89 (.98)	1.75 (.89)	2.65 (.92)	2.32 (1.01)	2.57 (1.06)	1.73 (.8)	2.62 (.9)	2.18 (.94)
Mean participant sex	2.41 (1.09)		2.53 (.96)		2.23 (1.04)		2.46 (.94)	
Mean female targets	2.48 (1.01)				2.36 (.98)			
	Male targets							
Western targets	3.21 (.92)	3 (1.43)	3.08 (.74)	2.19 (.99)	2.88 (.96)	2.93 (1.44)	3.07 (.89)	2.17 (.94)
Eastern targets	3.76 (.78)	2.96 (1.39)	3.04 (.89)	2.33 (1.06)	2.88 (.98)	2.96 (1.46)	2.88 (.85)	2.06 (.94)
Mean nationality	3.48 (.88)	2.98 (1.38)	3.06 (.81)	2.26 (1.01)	2.88 (95)	2.95 (1.42)	2.97 (.87)	2.11 (.93)
Mean participant sex	3.21 (1.19)		2.8 (.96)		2.91 (1.22)		2.69 (.97)	
Mean male targets	2.93 (1.05)				2.76 (1.06)			
Mean all sexualization	2.71 (1.06)				2.57 (1.05)			
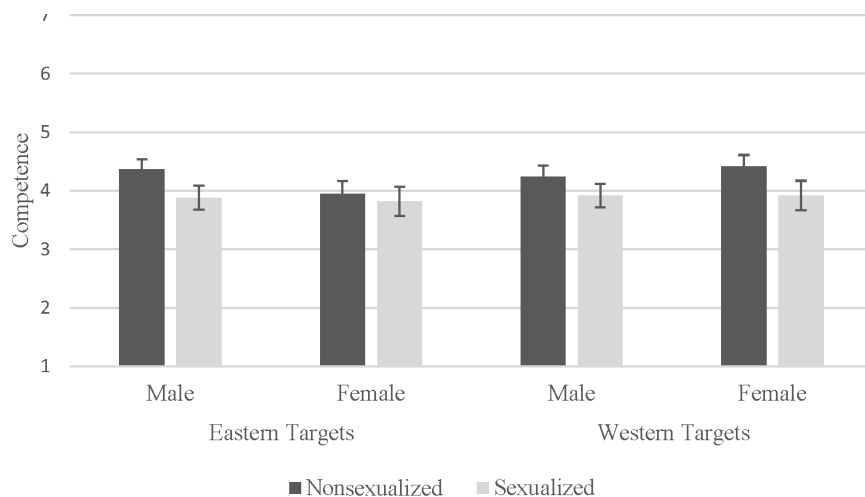
Figure 1. Participants' ratings of the competence of male and female targets as a function of target sexualization and target nationality. Error bars represent the 95% confidence interval (CI) of the mean.

Competence

To examine mind attribution, we first averaged the four competence items with the IQ measure because of the high correlations between these measures ($.49 < r < .63$, $p < .01$). In line with Hypothesis 1, there was a strong main effect of Target sexualization, with participants attributing less competence to sexualized targets than to nonsexualized targets (see Table 2). There were no two-way interactions with Target sexualization (contrary to Hypothesis 2). However, we found 3 three-way interactions associated with Target sexualization: (1) a Participant sex × Target sex × Target sexualization interaction, (2) a Target nationality × Target sex × Target sexualization interaction, and (3) a Participant nationality × Target nationality × Target sexualization interaction (see Table 1).

The interaction between Participant sex × Target sex × Target sexualization was examined by splitting the sample as a function of participant sex. For female participants, the effect of Target sexualization, $F(1,98) = 25.2$, $p < .001$, $\eta_G^2 = .04$, was equivalent for female and male targets. However, for male participants, the target's sex made a difference: The effect of Target sexualization was weaker for female than for male targets (see Table 2). Indeed, the interaction between Participant sex × Target sexualization only reached significance for male targets, $F(1, 54) = 4.79$, $p = .03$, $\eta_G^2 = .01$ versus $F < 1$ ($F(1, 98) = 0.5$, $p > .05$, $\eta_G^2 = .001$) for female targets. Thus, in regard to the attribution of competence, male participants dehumanized males more than females.

Second, in line with Hypothesis 3, we found an interaction between Target nationality × Target sex × Target sexualization, $F(1, 152) = 5.33$, $p = .02$, $\eta_G^2 = .004$. Focusing only on female targets, we found a main effect of Target sexualization, $F(1, 75) = 10.55$, $p = .02$, $\eta_G^2 = .03$, with participants attributing less competence to sexualized female targets than to nonsexualized female targets (see Figure 1). This main effect was qualified by an interaction between Target nationality and Target sexualization, $F(1, 75) = 6.33$, $p = .014$, $\eta_G^2 = .001$. When we decomposed this interaction on the basis of Target nationality, we found no significant effect of Target sexualization on Western

($p > .05$) or Eastern ($p > .05$) targets. However, an inspection of the means suggested that sexualization impaired the perceived competence of Western female targets more than that of Eastern female targets, which is in line with Hypothesis 3. However, focusing only on male targets, we found the same main effect of Target sexualization, $F(1, 77) = 42.55$, $p < .001$, $\eta_G^2 = .05$, but it was not qualified by Target nationality ($F(1, 77) = 1.24$, $p > .05$, $\eta_G^2 = .001$).

Note that, contrary to Hypothesis 2, we did not find that, overall, Belgians dehumanized sexually objectified targets more than Thais did.

Additional Findings for Competence Associated with Target Sexualization

We observed a Participant nationality × Target nationality × Target sexualization interaction. Splitting the interaction by participant nationality, we found that, for Belgian participants, the effect of Target sexualization, $F(1, 58) = 13.39$, $p < .001$, $\eta_G^2 = .04$, was not qualified by Target nationality, $F(1, 58) = 1.85$, $p = ns$, $\eta_G^2 = .005$. The same held for Thai participants, $F_{Sexualization}(1,94) = 25.88$, $p < .001$, $\eta_G^2 = .04$, $F_{Sexualization × Target nationality}(1,94) = 3.75$, $p = .06$, $\eta_G^2 = .005$. However, an inspection of the means revealed that, for Belgians, the negative effect of Target sexualization was stronger for Eastern ($M_{nonsexualized} = 4.04$, $SD_{nonsexualized} = 0.66$, $M_{sexualized} = 3.64$, $SD_{sexualized} = 0.86$) than for Western ($M_{nonsexualized} = 4.07$, $SD_{nonsexualized} = 0.61$, $M_{sexualized} = 3.87$, $SD_{sexualized} = 0.84$) targets, whereas for Thais, it was stronger for Western ($M_{nonsexualized} = 4.48$, $SD_{nonsexualized} = 0.98$, $M_{sexualized} = 3.95$, $SD_{sexualized} = 1.09$) than for Eastern targets ($M_{nonsexualized} = 4.24$, $SD_{nonsexualized} = 0.98$, $M_{sexualized} = 3.99$, $SD_{sexualized} = 1.08$); hence, the three-way interaction. This finding was unexpected.

Agency

In our examination of the Agency scale, the same mixed-model ANOVA as above revealed a main effect of Target sexualization, $F(1,152) = 35.36$, $p < .001$, $\eta_G^2 = .03$. In line with Hypothesis 1 (see Table 3), sexualized targets were seen as lacking agency compared to nonsexualized targets. There was no two-way interaction directly linked to Hypotheses 2 or 3. However, a three-way interaction related to Hypothesis 3 emerged.

We observed a Target sex × Participant sex × Target sexualization interaction, $F(1, 152) = 11.01$, $p = .001$, $\eta_G^2 = .01$. Splitting the interaction by participant sex, we found that, for female participants, the effect of Target sexualization, $F(1, 100) = 22.38$, $p < .001$, $\eta_G^2 = .04$, was qualified by target sex, $F(1, 100) = 7.25$, $p = .008$, $\eta_G^2 = .01$. In fact, we observed an effect of Target sexualization for female targets rated by female participants, $F(1, 46) = 22.01$, $p < .001$, $\eta_G^2 = .07$, with female participants attributing less agency to sexualized female targets than to nonsexualized female targets ($M_{sexualized} = 4.5$, $SD_{sexualized} = 0.93$, $M_{nonsexualized} = 5$, $SD_{nonsexualized} = 0.76$). However, this effect did not appear with male targets, $F(1, 54) = 3.4$, $p = .07$, $\eta_G^2 = .01$.

Focusing on male participants, we found that the effect of Target sexualization, $F(1, 56) = 13.75$, $p < .001$, $\eta_G^2 = .04$, was also qualified by target sex, $F(1, 56) = 5.11$, $p = .02$, $\eta_G^2 = .01$. When we considered female targets as rated by male participants, we found no effect of Target sexualization, $F(1, 31) = 1.67$, $p = ns$, $\eta_G^2 = .008$. However, when we considered male targets as rated by male participants, we did observe an effect of Target sexualization, $F(1, 25) = 15.84$, $p < .001$, $\eta_G^2 = .09$, with male participants attributing less agency to sexualized male targets than to nonsexualized male targets. Thus, men attributed less agency to male targets when the latter were sexualized and women attributed less agency to female targets when female targets were sexualized. Again, contrary to Hypothesis 2, we did not find that, overall, Belgians dehumanized sexually objectified targets more than Thais did.

Additional Findings for Agency associated with Target Sexualization

We found a Target nationality × Target sexualization interaction, $F(1, 152) = 4.31$, $p = .04$, $\eta_G^2 = .004$. When we only considered Western targets, we found an effect of Target sexualization, $F(1, 159) = 5.79$, $p = .02$, $\eta_G^2 = .01$, with participants
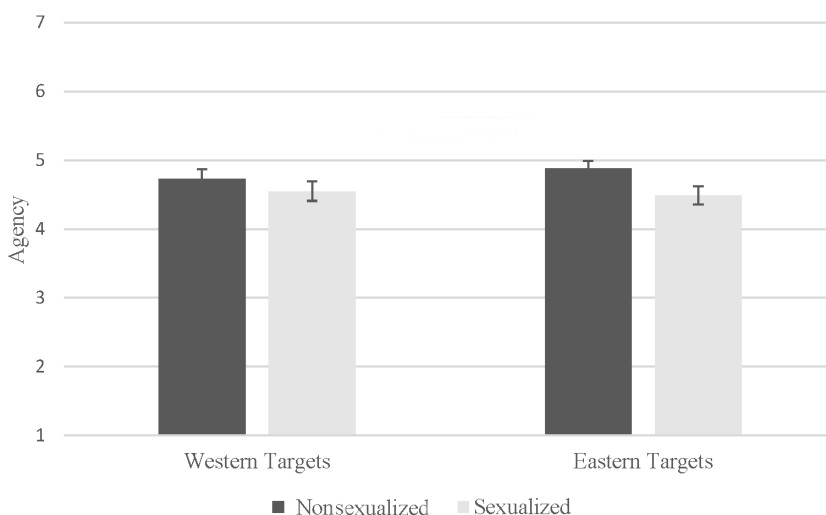

Figure 2. Participants' ratings of the mental capacity of Western and Eastern targets as a function of target sexualization. Error bars represent the 95% confidence interval (CI) of the mean.
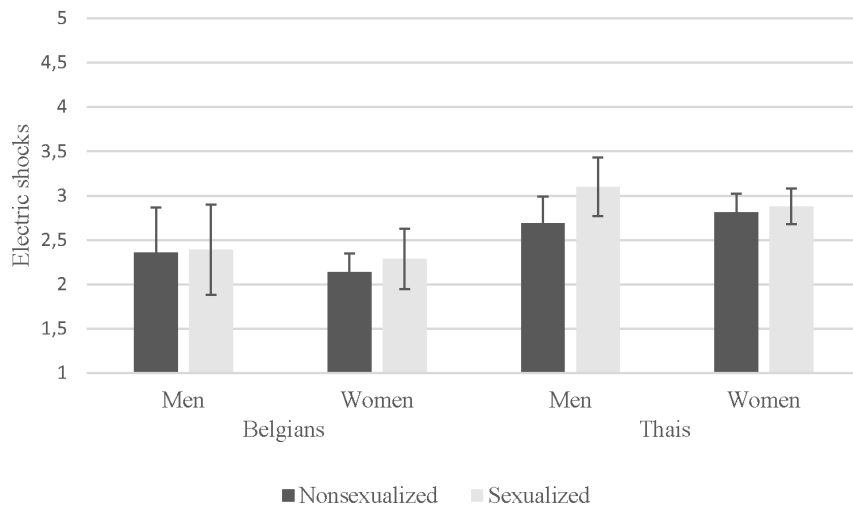
Figure 3. Male and female participants' ratings of the intensity of electric shocks they would administer to the target as a function of target sexualization and participant nationality. Error bars represent the 95% confidence interval (CI) of the mean.

attributing lower agency to sexualized targets than to nonsexualized targets. When we considered Eastern targets, the same main effect emerged, $F(1, 159) = 35.7$, $p < .001$, $\eta_G^2 = .06$, but it was stronger for Eastern than for Western targets (see Figure 2).

Infliction of Pain

In this moral status task, participants indicated the intensity of electric shock they would administer to inflict temporary pain on each target. The same mixed-model ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of Target sexualization, $F(1, 152) = 9.59$, $p = .002$, $\eta_G^2 = .006$. As expected (and in line with Hypothesis 1 – see Table 4), participants indicated that they would inflict more intense electric shocks on sexualized targets than on nonsexualized targets. No interaction associated with Hypotheses 2 or 3 emerged.

Additional Findings for the Infliction of Pain Associated with Target Sexualization

We found a Target nationality × Target sexualization interaction, $F(1, 152) = 4.99$, $p = .03$, $\eta_G^2 = .03$. When we only considered Western targets, we did not find an effect of Target sexualization, $F(1, 159) = 1.40$, $p = ns$, $\eta_G^2 = 0$. However, when we considered Eastern targets, we observed a main effect of Target sexualization, $F(1, 159) = 11.72$, $p < .01$, $\eta_G^2 = .01$, with participants indicating that they would inflict more intense electric shocks on sexualized targets than on nonsexualized targets.

Second, we observed a Participant nationality × Participant sex × Target sexualization interaction, $F(1, 152) = 6.47$, $p = .01$, $\eta_G^2 = .004$. Splitting the interaction by participant nationality, we found that, for Belgian participants, the effect of Target sexualization, $F(1, 58) = 8.83$, $p = .004$, $\eta_G^2 = .002$, was not qualified by Participant sex, $F(1, 58) = 3.46$, $p = ns$, $\eta_G^2 = .001$. For Thai participants, the main effect of Target sexualization, $F(1, 94) = 5.74$, $p = .02$, $\eta_G^2 = .01$, was qualified by sex, $F(1, 94) = 5.57$, $p = .02$, $\eta_G^2 = .01$. In the Thai sample, male participants were influenced by Target sexualization more than female participants were. In the Belgian sample, Target sexualization ex-

erted a similarly small effect on male and female participants for this interaction (see Figure 3). Again, contrary to Hypothesis 2, we did not find that, overall, Belgians dehumanized sexualized targets more than Thais did.

Discussion

Building on and extending the findings of Loughnan et al. (2015), the results of this study indicate that sexual objectification is present both in a Western cultural context (Belgium) and an Eastern cultural context (Thailand). Addressing an important limitation of the study by Loughnan et al. (2015), the present study additionally addressed the interaction between the observer's and the target's nationality.

Main Effect of Target Sexualization

This study replicates well-established findings in the literature on objectification (cf. Heflick & Goldenberg, 2009; Heflick et al., 2011; Loughnan et al., 2010, 2015). We observed a reliable effect of Target sexualization across all dependent variables (in line with Hypothesis 1): Participants attributed less competence and agency and indicated that they would administer more intense electric shocks to sexualized than to nonsexualized targets.

Sexual Objectification is Common in Thailand and Belgium

A primary goal of this study was to explore the cultural dimension in the current literature on objectification. Hence, we aimed to test the cultural relativism account (elaborating the findings by Loughnan et al., 2015, on the other-objectification

measures) involving significant differences between Westerners and Easterners (Hypothesis 2). The principal novelty of our study is that it considers the impact of a target's sex and nationality in two different cultural contexts: Western (Belgium) and Eastern (Thailand). This study extends Loughnan et al.'s (2015) findings and confirms that sexual objectification generates dehumanization in Western (Belgian) and Eastern (Thai) cultures.

In addition, the variables that might explain the link between sexualization and dehumanization have not been the subject of extensive research in the current cross-cultural literature yet. In the following, we consider several factors that may explain why levels of dehumanization of sexualized targets are high in both Thailand and Belgium.

First, exposure to media images with a high degree of sexualization may lead people to adopt a perception of their body as a mere object (cf. Aubrey, 2006; Krawczyk & Thompson, 2015; Nowatzki & Morry, 2009). Aubrey (2006) demonstrated that exposure to television programs in which the protagonists are sexually objectified socializes us to take an outsider's perspective on our physical selves (i.e., "How do I look?"). In this sense, exposure to sexualized media involves a focus on physical appearance, which could play a role in the link between sexualization and dehumanization. Similarly, women objectified other women when targets were presented in provocative outfits, but not when they were presented in nonprovocative attire (Gurung & Chrouser, 2007). Indicators such as the number of televisions sets per capita or access to the internet suggest that Belgians are exposed to visual media portraying objectified women more than Thais are (NationMaster Database, 1997). However, even if Belgians are twice as likely to possess a television set and are over twice as likely to have internet access than Thais, citizens of some Southeast Asian countries (e.g., Thailand, Vietnam) spend much more time consuming online content than those of Western European countries (e.g., France, Italy; Global Web Index, 2014, based on a survey of Internet users aged 16–64 years). In this regard, exposure to objectifying media may explain why Thais and Belgians objectify sexualized bodies in Thailand (Chaipraditkul, 2013) and in Belgium (Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2012). In other words, it may be that the similar results obtained in Belgium and Thailand concerning the effects of sexualization on participants' attribution of competence and agency as well as the intensity of electric shocks participants would administer are related to similarities in the two cultures with respect to cultural entertainment and exposure to sexualized bodies (see Awasthi, 2017, for a detailed discussion). Moreover, note that Civile, Rajagobal, and Obhi (2016) examined whether object-like recognition of female bodies (Bernard, Gervais et al., 2015; Civile & Obhi, 2016; see also Bernard et al., 2017, for recent findings) generalizes to Asian targets. These authors relied on a sample of Caucasian participants and found that Caucasian targets were cognitively objectified, whereas Asian targets were not. The authors explained that their findings were likely driven by the way Caucasian models are sexualized to a greater extent than Asian

targets in the media (e.g., with an increased focus on sexual body parts for Caucasian targets), which seems to contradict our findings. The presence of differences between our findings and other recent findings (Civile et al., 2016; Loughnan et al., 2015) also calls for better controlled stimuli to properly test the cultural account of the objectification of others. To this end, we invite researchers to take pictures of actual people of different nationalities wearing sexualized versus nonsexualized clothing and use them in a study manipulating Target nationality while keeping other low-level features (clothing color, type of underwear/swimsuit, neutral facial expressions, body postures, etc.) constant.

Second, in a recent study, Gervais, Bernard, and Riemer (2015) found that cultural orientation, measured in a sample of US subjects, predicted objectification perpetration. More specifically, they found a positive association between adhesion to vertical individualism (Triandis, 1995; Triandis & Gelfand, 1998), that is, "perceiving the self as an autonomous individual and accepting hierarchy and inequality among individuals" (Gervais et al., 2015, p. 157; see also Triandis, 1995; Triandis & Gelfand, 1998; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk, & Gelfand, 1995) and objectification. This effect was mediated by social comparison. According to Gervais et al. (2015), in a highly hierarchical society, in which social status is perceived as being fluid and social mobility deemed possible, people may be more likely to engage in social comparison to evaluate their social position. This may lead them to focus on others' physical appearance. Previous work has demonstrated that Belgium has a relatively high ranking with respect to vertical individualism (Inglehart & Welzel, 2010a, 2010b). Interestingly, the Thai culture has been shown to be very hierarchical (e.g., Fieg & Blair, 1980; Komin, 2000; Mulder, 1996), even though it also includes a horizontal collectivism pattern (McCann, Honeycutt, & Keaton, 2010). Examples of the vertical orientation in Thailand are common, such as the traditional Thai *sakdina* (ranking of citizens) or the deferential language and postures (e.g., Thai *wai*), depending on the status of the interlocutor (Holmes, Tangtongtavy, & Tomizawa, 1995). Thus, Belgium and Thailand show important vertical traits that may lead Belgians and Thai to focus on others' physical appearance and in turn perpetrate sexual objectification.

Gender Differences in Sexual Objectification

Previous work in the field of objectification and mind attribution has sometimes found (Bernard et al., 2013; Cikara et al., 2011; Heflick et al., 2011) – and sometimes failed to find (Gray, Knobe, Sheskin, Bloom, & Barrett, 2011; Loughnan et al., 2010, 2015) – differences in objectification as a function of target sex. In the present study, we aimed to verify the presence of an interaction between target sexualization and target sex in a cross-cultural framework, thereby contributing to the debate in this field of research. The results of this study indicate that

female participants dehumanize male and female targets in terms of the competence dimension. However, for male participants, the effect of target sexualization was stronger for male than for female targets. Thus, male participants seem to dehumanize male more than female targets. Similarly, male participants attributed less agency to male targets when they were sexualized and women attributed less agency to female targets when they were sexualized. Consequently, we question the notion that men dehumanize women more than women do.

In addition, we observed that men and women dehumanized same-sex targets when they were sexualized. This might be explained by a motivation to distance oneself from sexualized targets, possibly in an effort to assert one's own qualities on these dimensions (Puvia & Vaes, 2015; Vaes, Leyens, Paola Paladino, & Pires Miranda, 2012; Vaes et al., 2011). This may also be a response to the threat idealized bodies pose to one's self-image (Bordo, 1993; Puvia & Vaes, 2013; Wolf, 1991). Thus, while dehumanization may be the outcome of sexualization, the reasons for dehumanization may be different as a function of the gender relationship between perceiver and target. This might explain why target sex does not necessarily moderate objectification or sexualization effects.

Also note that, to the best of our knowledge, the studies using Loughnan's paradigm (i.e., comparing sexualized and nonsexualized targets on dehumanization outcomes), including ours, fail to find a unilateral effect of target sex on dehumanization. In other studies, objectification was either manipulated by having participants focus on the appearance or the personality of a nonobjectified target using an indirect measure of dehumanization[3] (e.g., Heflick & Goldenberg, 2009), or it was measured using indices of the cognitive processing of target perception (e.g., Bernard, Gervais et al., 2015; Gervais et al., 2012). It is possible that in patriarchal cultures, the dehumanization of women is more automatic than the dehumanization of men (cf. Klein, Allen, Bernard, & Gervais, 2014) and may, therefore, appear more readily when subtle measures are used. Thus, methodological differences may play a role and a systematic comparison of methods and stimuli would be necessary to identify the reasons for these inconsistencies.

Thus, the recent literature on the denial of mind perception to objectified targets (e.g., Cikara et al., 2011; Gray et al., 2011; Loughnan et al., 2010) is not conclusive on the role of target sex, or on the exact dimension of mind perception that is denied to objectified targets. However, since women's appearance is more frequently inspected (cf. Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997), these effects are more relevant to their lives than to men's.

Above and beyond these discrepancies as regards the effects of sex, previous work in the field of objectification and mind attribution suggests that focusing on another person's or on one's own body can lead to a reduction of perceived mind.

Future research should focus more on different motivations that drive men and women to dehumanize targets of each sex.

For example, in this study, we demonstrated that the target's nationality also plays a role in these gender effects. Indeed, we aimed at testing the assumption that Western women are perceived as being more promiscuous than Eastern women. Hence, we expected the impact of sexualization on the dependent variables to be stronger for Western than for Eastern targets (Hypothesis 3). For the competence dimension, the results of this study indicate that, for Eastern targets, male targets suffer more from Target sexualization than female targets do. For Western targets, from a purely descriptive standpoint, the reverse occurs, with females suffering more than males from Target sexualization. Thus, in line with Hypothesis 3, although participants attributed less competence to men when sexualized regardless of their nationality, the negative impact of Target sexualization was found to be stronger for Western than for Eastern women (see Figure 1). This finding suggests that it is crucial to manipulate the target's and the participant's nationality independently. Indeed, the discrepancy between Loughnan et al.'s (2015) findings and ours may be due in part to the fact that, in their study, Eastern participants only rated Eastern targets. This may have led to an underestimation of their tendency to dehumanize sexualized women.

Optimal Distinctiveness and Sexual Objectification

The role of distinctiveness in the dehumanization of sexualized targets is corroborated by the Participant nationality × Target nationality × Target sexualization interaction on the competence dimension. Indeed, for Belgians, the negative effect of target sexualization is stronger for Eastern than for Western targets whereas, for Thais, it is stronger for Western than for Eastern targets (regardless of target sex). In light of social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), this phenomenon can be seen as a defensive effect of the intragroup involving the dehumanization of the outgroup.

Optimal distinctiveness theory (Brewer, 1991, 2003) posits that individuals need to maintain the relationship between membership in a social group and keep their self-concept stable. To this end, they have to find a balance between two opposite concepts (i.e., assimilation and differentiation). The results of our study evidence a pattern consistent with this idea: We observed that the participants of this study tended to dehumanize the cultural outgroup more (the effect of target sexualization is stronger for Belgian participants for Thai targets and vice versa) and the intragroup based on sex (men appeared to dehumanize male targets more than female targets and vice versa) in a situation of sexual objectification. One might understand the above

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[3] One such indirect measure of dehumanization is the mean correlation between participants' judgments of the targets' psychological traits and the participants' perceptions of the humanness of each of these traits.

findings as an attempt to find a balance between the needs of assimilation and differentiation (i.e., a Belgian man could depreciate Eastern people and differentiate himself from other males by dehumanizing them).

Electric Shocks and Pain: A Pattern Emerges

Using the infliction of pain as an indicator of moral agency, we observed that, among Thai participants, males were influenced by target sexualization more than females. In the Belgian sample, target sexualization had the same but small effect, regardless of sex for this interaction (see Figure 3). A peculiarity of the Thai cultural context lies in the prevalence of the sex industry, prostitution, and noncommercial sex relations (cf. Knodel, VanLandingham, Saengtienchai, & Pramualratana, 1996) as well as the higher level of sexism and gender inequality in Thailand compared to Belgium (Brandt, 2011, see also Glick et al., 2000), which may make Thai men particularly likely to sexually objectify women as well as men. Hence, for Thai men, it may be more socially acceptable to inflict pain on another person, especially when that person is sexualized. Future research examining the role of differences in sexism and its consequences on objectification in Thailand and Belgium may highlight this phenomenon.

Conclusion

This paper contributes to the development of a cross-cultural perspective on sexual objectification. The results of this study provide evidence that sexual objectification is not exclusively present in Western cultures, but also common in Eastern cultures. Indeed, this study is the first to show that sexual objectification generates dehumanization in both Western (Belgium) and Eastern (Thailand) cultures. While we exclusively focused on clothes (dressed vs. revealed), further investigations may consider body posture (suggestive vs. neutral) as a second measure of sexualization. Manipulating these two variables of sexualization together for both male and female targets in a cross-cultural framework should shed more light on the sexual objectification phenomenon, thereby contributing to the debate in this field of research.

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