**Effects of Waist-to-Hip Ratio on Sexual Objectification and Sexual Assault**

**BACKGROUND**

Existing work on waist-to-hip ratio (WHR) women with relatively low WHRs:
- are more healthy (e.g., lower rates of diabetes, heart disease; Björntorp, 1988, 1991b)
- appear more youthful (Kaye, et al., 1990)
- have greater reproductive success and fertility (Barber, 1995; Kaye, et al., 1990)
- are rated as more attractive (e.g., Furnham et al., 2001, Singh & Luis, 1995).
- Are evaluated as more sexually desirable (Barber, 1995)

In sum, women with relatively lower WHRs possess greater mate quality relatively to women with higher WHRs.

**STUDY 1 - PURPOSE**

We aimed to investigate whether the previously documented effects of WHR on mate quality would translate into differences in expectations and treatment of women based on WHR.

Main Effect Hypothesis: Specifically, because women with relatively lower WHRs possess greater mate quality and are evaluated as more sexually desirable we predicted they would more sexually objectified

Interaction Hypothesis: We also investigated whether participant gender and WHR interacted to predict sexual objectification ratings.
- Because mate quality is relevant to reproduction these effects of WHR on sexual objectification may be stronger for men than women.

**STUDY 1 - METHOD**

Participants:
- Recruited 75 online participants (49.3% female)

Procedure:
- Viewed 6 BMI matched (21) targets with varying WHR from .6 to .85 (Kościński, 2014)

**STUDY 1 - RESULTS**

6 (WHR) x 2 (Participant gender) mixed model ANOVA on sexual objectification
- WHR had a significant effect on ratings of sexual objectification, F(5,365)=25.05, p<.001, ηp²=.24
- Not qualified by an interaction with participant gender F(5, 365)=.93, p=.46, ηp²=.01
- Because In Study 1 we are assessing general perceptions of the target (not the participants own feelings about the target) men and women might evaluate targets similarly.

**STUDY 2 - METHOD**

Participants:
- Recruited 387 online participants
  - Failed the attention check
  - Completed the study in under 231.60 seconds (1 SD below mean)
  - Did not disclose their gender
  - 335 usable participants (57% female)

Procedure:
- Viewed image of either low (.60) or high (.85) WHR target from Study 1
- Read vignette about a reported sexual assault from perspectives of the victim and perpetrator (adapted from Platiau, 2015)
- Labeled the incident (η= .95; Koss & Gidycz, 1985; Messman-Moore, et al., 2010)
- Rape
- Sexual Assault
- Non-Consensual
- Assessment of Victim Blaming (η=.90; adapted from Abrams, Viki, Masser, & Bohner, 2003)
- Completed Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (η=.92; Payne, Lonsway, & Fitzgerald, 1999; McMahon & Farmer, 2011)

**STUDY 2 - RESULTS**

All analyses reported control for individual differences in rape myth acceptance

Labeling the Event:
- 2 (WHR Condition) x 2 (Participant Gender) between subjects ANOVA on labeling scenario
  - No main effect of WHR, F(1,330)=.85, p=.357, ηp²=.00
  - Interaction of condition and participant gender, F(1,330)=6.74, p=.010, ηp²=.02

Blaming the victim:
- 2 (WHR Condition) x 2 (Participant Gender) between subjects ANOVA on blaming the victim
  - No main effect of WHR, F(1,330)=.85, p=.357, ηp²=.00
  - Interaction of condition and participant gender, F(1,330)=5.04, p=.025, ηp²=.02

Interaction Hypothesis: We also investigated whether participant gender interacted with WHR to predict responses to sexual assault claims.
- Because mate quality is relevant to reproduction the effects of WHR on evaluations of purported sexual assault may be stronger for men than women.

**GENERAL DISCUSSION**

Overall:
- As WHR decreases perceptions of sexual objectification increase
- Men were less likely to take claims of assault seriously and blamed the victim more when victims had a relatively higher WHR; WHR affected the judgments of women less – and descriptively in the opposite direction.

Implications:
- Disclosures of sexual assault
  - Reactions to disclosures of sexual assaults have serious psychological consequences for the victim (e.g., PTSD symptomology; Ullman & Peter-Hagen, 2016)
- Court cases involving sexual assault
  - Decisions of guilt in sexual assault cases may be influenced by victims body