

C

Contexts for Men's Aggression Against Women



Rachel M. James, Todd K. Shackelford and Viviana A. Weekes-Shackelford
Department of Psychology, Oakland University,
Rochester, MI, USA

Synonyms

Homicide; Intrasexual competition; Physical aggression; Rape; Rivalry; Sexual coercion; Sexual jealousy; Violence

Definition

Evolutionary pressures on men and women result in sex-specific sexual strategies. Whereas men use physical aggression to secure sexual access and/or to deter rivals, men use sexual aggression to minimize their investment for sexual access and to thwart female sexual choice. Men use distinct forms of aggression against women, because, on average, these behaviors conferred ancestral benefits that exceeded the associated costs.

Introduction

In the context of mating, men and women have engaged in a co-evolutionary arms race.

Specifically, reproduction and child-rearing often generate conflict between the sexes. Whereas men more than women pursue a relatively short-term mating strategy, by which they attempt to secure sexual access to multiple partners, women more than men pursue a relatively longer-term mating strategy, by which they attempt to secure resources for themselves and their offspring. One way in which men and women manage conflicting sexual strategies is through physical aggression and violence; an extreme manifestation of which is homicide. However, men commit the majority of instances of intimate partner violence and of homicide, cross-culturally (Daly and Wilson 1988). Additionally, men use sexual aggression against women to bypass female choice and male–male competition. Similarly to physical violence, men, more often than women, are the perpetrators of sexual coercion and rape (Knight and Sims-Knight 2011).

Sex differences in violence perpetration emerge because of distinctive sexual strategies (Buss and Shackelford 1997). Men and women use aggression differently because of sex-differentiated minimum obligatory parental investment and associated sexual selection (Cross and Campbell 2011). Women, compared to men, invest more time and energy into their offspring, making women a valuable reproductive resource for men. Men, in contrast, invest much less in offspring (e.g., the physiological cost of an ejaculate and the time required to produce it). Because women engage in most of the child-

rearing, for ancestral men to have been reproductively successful, they must have outcompeted rivals to secure the attention of high-investing females. Thus, our ancestors include those males who successfully used violence against rival males to gain sexual access to females. However, violence also may have been successfully inflicted on female mates, to thereby assure paternal certainty. More specifically, ancestral men may have used aggression against women and thereby thwarted them from deserting or committing sexual infidelity and are likely to have been more reproductively successful as a consequence (Buss 2014). Whereas it may have been ancestrally adaptive for men to be physically aggressive to combat paternity uncertainty or cuckoldry, female aggression is less likely to have been selected over evolutionary time. Given the investment that women contribute to their offspring, women may have evolved mechanisms, such as greater sensitivity to fear (Cross and Campbell 2011), that motivate them to avoid involvement in physical violence. In fact, research indicates that women engage much less frequently than men in extreme violence (e.g., homicide; Daly and Wilson 1988; Perilla et al. 2011). When women do aggress, this aggression is more likely than men's aggression to be nonlethal.

As with physical aggression, men use sexual aggression against women as a part of a sex-specific sexual strategy (Buss 2014). Sexual aggression (e.g., rape) is one tactic men may use to reduce the investment they trade for female sexual access. By exercising sexual aggression and circumventing female choice, ancestral men may have secured increased reproductive success while contributing fewer resources to the woman who rears their offspring. Thornhill and Palmer (2000) suggest that by sexually coercing women, men may succeed in competition for mates without having to be chosen by a woman or winning male–male competitions for sexual access. In contrast, nonevolutionary explanations of risk factors for sexual coercion or rape suggest that men perpetuate because they have rape-supportive attitudes, perceptual biases (i.e., believing that a woman's friendly behavior is sexual), high alcohol use, and high pornography consumption

(especially aggressive genres of porn; Knight and Sims-Knight 2011). However, although it is important to acknowledge these individual characteristics and behaviors of sexually coercive men, those explanations do not engage ultimate causes of sexual aggression.

To avoid cuckoldry and to assure exclusive sexual access to a long-term partner, men's use of *physical* aggression against women is associated with male sexual jealousy, the age of the woman, and sexual rejection. Additionally, men's use of *sexual* aggression against women is associated with the age of the woman, male assessment of the vulnerability of the woman, and various individual differences in men (e.g., disadvantaged men and specialized rapists who are sexually aroused by violent or forceful sex).

Contexts for Men's Physical Aggression Against Women

Although some researchers argue that partner killing by men was not ancestrally adaptive and, therefore, not selected over human evolutionary history (Daly and Wilson 1988), other researchers argue that men have evolved specialized mechanisms for partner-killing, designed to be deployed when it would have been ancestrally adaptive to do so (i.e., in the context of the threatened departure of a long-term partner; Buss 2006). Specifically, Daly and Wilson (1988) propose that partner-killing is an extreme manifestation of male sexual jealousy or "proprietaryness," unintentionally slipping from control to murder; the killing of a partner would not have provided sufficient reproductive benefits to the killer to outweigh the associated costs. Buss (2006), in contrast, suggests that men have an evolved psychology that motivates killing of a partner when killing produces benefits that exceed the costs. Consistent with both competing hypotheses, homicide and intimate partner violence are inflicted by men to deter partners from sexual infidelity or defecting from the relationship. Physically aggressive and homicidal acts that men commit against their female partners are often triggered by sexual jealousy (i.e., stemming from

paternity uncertainty or the threat of cuckoldry), the age of the female partner, and/or experiencing romantic or sexual rejection.

Sexual Jealousy

First, lethal or nonlethal violence is regularly directed by men against their female partners in the context of male sexual jealousy (Buss 2000; Daly and Wilson 1988). In fact, male sexual jealousy is the most common cause of wife battery and a leading cause of uxoricide or wife-killing (Daly and Wilson 1988). Although jealousy is a common experience among both sexes, women report that they would be more distressed by a partner's *emotional* infidelity than *sexual* infidelity; whereas, the opposite pattern is reported by men (Buss et al. 1992). Specifically, men express greater distress by the prospect of or the actual act of a partner's sexual infidelity than by a partner's emotional infidelity. These sex differences in jealousy arise because of differences in evolved sexual strategies that men and women pursue; each sex has its own set of goals and means of attempting to achieve them. In the conflict of interest between the sexes, women desire to secure long-term relationships in which they can secure resources for themselves and their offspring. However, women may sometimes "out-source" or copulate with other men to obtain higher quality genes for their offspring. If successful, women are assured the resources they need and have secured better genes for their offspring. In the process, they will have successfully deceived their long-term partner into raising and investing in offspring to whom he is not genetically related. Men, on the other hand, and relative to women, have evolved an interest in sex with multiple partners and with lesser investment in any one partner. To assure paternity, however, men may invest in a particular woman for the long-term, in which case they are motivated to thwart her attempts at infidelity. Sexual infidelity by a man's partner can result in the loss of time, effort, and resources in his partner, which could have been spent securing a different mate that would have been sexually faithful. If her sexual

infidelity results in cuckoldry, her partner invests precious resources into a rival's offspring. In essence, women have evolved motivation to maintain their sexual autonomy, whereas men coevolved motivation to control their female partner's sexual behavior (Smuts 1992). To control female sexual behavior, male strategies range from physical violence to vigilance. The most extreme form of violence, homicide, occurs most often in the context of male sexual jealousy (Daly and Wilson 1988). In fact, men who kill their partners often do so because of suspected or discovered sexual infidelity, which embodies male concerns with paternity certainty and cuckoldry. Additionally, partner-killing by men most often occurs when the woman attempts to desert her partner and the relationship; in which case, the loss of a reproductively valuable woman to a rival motivates male proprietary aggression (Buss 2014). However, partner-killing by men does not inevitably follow suspected or discovered female partner infidelity or desertion; men also use nonlethal violence to control their partner's sexual behavior.

Ancestral men recurrently faced the adaptive problem of paternity uncertainty because fertilization occurs within women. Whereas women are never unsure that their offspring are genetically their own, men face the problem of being deceived into providing resources and care for a rival's offspring. Given that men cannot account for their partner's sexual behavior at all times, the possibility of cuckoldry increases as time spent with one's partner decreases (Buss 2000). To combat the threat of cuckoldry, male sexual jealousy may have evolved as a mechanism of detection and as a motivator of subsequent (sometimes violent) action (Buss 2000). Further, male sexual jealousy plays a key role in intimate partner violence (Goetz et al. 2008). Specifically, male physical violence or aggression functions to punish or deter women from sexual infidelity; in these circumstances, violence against women functions as an anticuckoldry tactic. Because women have evolved as the less aggressive sex (due to internal fertilization and the need to protect reproductive and child-rearing capabilities), men can exploit women's interest in self-preservation for their

own reproductive gain (i.e., women's fear of physical harm by men may stop them from deserting their partner, increasing their partner's opportunities to reproduce). The sexual jealousy arising from paternity uncertainty also manifests in the most severe form of violence, homicide. For instance, unemployment may influence men's aggression against women in the context of potential cuckoldry. Men who lack sufficient resources may be at a greater risk of cuckoldry than men in higher socioeconomic brackets (Buss 2006). One study found that of the men who killed their partners, 64% were unemployed at the time of the homicide (Easteal 1993). Given women's evolved interest in securing resources and support, it is not surprising that men with fewer expendable resources may be at greater risk of partner infidelity and cuckoldry. Although partner-killing is costly in terms of lost reproductive opportunities and time squandered securing the murdered partner, the benefits of homicide might sometimes exceed such costs, with the result that selection favored male psychological mechanisms that motivates partner-killing, under particular circumstances (Buss 2006).

Motivated often by sexual jealousy, men attempt to stop women from deserting them through physical violence or killing. Male sexual jealousy is a frequent correlate of such controlling behaviors and violence. Men use both nonlethal (e.g., verbal threats) and more severe (e.g., homicide) forms of violence to control a woman's sexual behavior (Smuts 1992); many of these behaviors can be described as mate retention behaviors. One class of these behaviors is direct mate guarding; while engaging in this form of mate retention, men physically guard a mate and actively dissuade potential mate poachers. Direct mate guarding also includes more explicitly dangerous forms of control such as physical aggression. Men do not exclusively direct their aggression toward other men; violence as a mate retention behavior may include physical aggression against their partner (Shackelford et al. 2005). Specifically, direct mate guarding, monopolization of time, and punishment for a partner's perceived or actual infidelity predict female-directed violence. In sum, violence is closely

related to autonomy-preventing mate retention behaviors. By using mate guarding tactics successfully, men inhibit or restrict their partner's sexual opportunities and stop them from deserting, becoming more confident that they are the sire of any offspring produced by their partner (Buss and Shackelford 1997). However, in cases which the woman does abandon her partner, the risk of homicide increases dramatically (Daly and Wilson 1988). Women are most likely to be killed by their estranged partner within the first year after a break-up (Buss 2006). Thus, when nonlethal violence does not prevent female infidelity or relationship defection, men may resort to homicide (Buss 2006). In such cases, a man might benefit from killing his partner, rather than simply letting her go, because she may offer reproductive opportunities to rivals, while he may not be able to replace the mate for his own reproductive endeavors. Further, and in connection with an earlier point, men who are unemployed kill their partners more often than men who are employed, and these same unemployed men are more inclined to kill or attempt to kill their partner when she breaks off the relationship with them (Easteal 1993). This is because unemployed men typically lack the resources women desire and are less likely to secure a new mate in the future. By eliminating their partner, these men could thereby establish credit for their reputation (in certain cultures) and retain the resources that would have been allocated to the woman.

Age of Woman

The age of a woman predicts the likelihood she will be the target of intimate partner violence or homicide. Young women are more likely to be killed by their partner than are older women (Shackelford et al. 2000). Specifically, women aged 15 to 24 years, within the reproductive age bracket, are most likely to be killed by their partner (Daly and Wilson 1988). Women in the youthful, reproductive periods of their lives are more valuable to men as mates. Younger women are more sexually attractive and desirable to men because youth represents or indicates their

fertility, which is important in male mate choice and ancestral male reproductive success. Additionally, males with a youthful and attractive partner gain social status from their mateship to this valuable reproductive commodity. Given the motivation and interest to secure as mates young, fertile women with high reproductive value, male sexual jealousy should be especially sensitive in the context of mateship to younger women. Because younger women are more desirable to male rivals, male sexual jealousy motivates men to defend their partners from mate poachers and sometimes motivates them to use aggression against their partner to stop them from deflecting. Men with younger, reproductive age partners are more likely to commit violence against them to control their sexual behavior (Smuts 1992). Because of the reproductive damage a younger woman (relative to an older woman) can cause her partner as the result of her desertion or sexual infidelity, nonlethal and lethal violence are much more likely to be deployed by men against younger partners than by men against older partners. Additionally, researchers have investigated whether younger women are killed more often than older women simply because younger women are mated to younger and more violent men. The results of this research found that younger women are more likely to be killed across male partner age groups (Shackelford et al. 2000). In sum, younger women are at greater risk than older women of intimate partner violence and homicide.

Sexual Rejection

Sexual rejection may motivate men's aggression against women. Specifically, nonlethal and non-sexual aggression in response to denial of sexual access is a class of problems that women have faced recurrently over human evolutionary history. One study indicated that male rejection sensitivity is associated to perpetration of intimate partner violence (Downey et al. 2000). In particular, men who indicated a lower threshold for rejection negatively perceive and overreact to their partner's ambiguous or negative behavior, heightening their risk for responding aggressively.

These researchers also found that, among college-aged men who indicated they are more invested in their intimate relationships, anxious expectations of rejection predicted their use of violence against their partner. In this context, it is possible that men respond anxiously and aggressively to rejection because they perceive that they have lost the opportunity to mate exclusively with a desired woman. Additionally, other researchers found that experiencing romantic rejection from a sexualized woman increases male aggression (Blake et al. 2017). In this study, when men were romantically rejected by a sexualized woman (sexualized through clothing in a profile picture and in response to sex-related questions) via an online dating platform, the men delivered more severe sound-blasts to the sexually-rejecting woman. Although these studies shed light on non-lethal aggression, sexual or romantic rejection may lead to serious consequences, such as homicide. Consider desertion or abandonment, for example. Ending a relationship is, in effect, a permanent denial of sexual access and rejection of one's previous partner. When a man's sexual strategy is thwarted, discomfort and anger is expected to rise. Given how costly it is for a man to invest in a woman only to be denied sexual access, male violence may have been ancestrally adaptive in securing future mating attempts or in ending a woman's life to thereby deny rivals sexual access to that woman.

Contexts for Men's Sexual Aggression Against Women

US studies across the nation, criminal justice systems, healthcare systems, and college campuses indicate that men's sexual aggression against women is a widespread and prevalent problem (Knight and Sims-Knight 2011). From an evolutionary perspective, men may use sexual aggression against women to circumvent female choice and thereby to invest fewer resources for sexual access. By avoiding male-male competition for female sexual access and reducing the time, energy, and investment spent courting a desired woman, men may increase their sexual access by

use of sexual aggression. Because women have an evolved sexual strategy in which they pursue long-term or committed and high-investing males, men who use sexual aggression against them expose them to undesirable circumstances (i.e., rearing an offspring without receiving resources from a mate). One study suggests that men's sexual aggression against women is extremely upsetting to women (Buss 1989) and much more upsetting than men estimate. Buss (1989) found that among college-aged women, sexual aggression was the single most upsetting act a man could commit out of 147 potentially upsetting actions. Given the conflict of interest between the sexes, a strategy of sexual aggression or rape may have evolved in men, while antirape defenses have co-evolved in women.

Rape refers to the use of force or the threat of force to secure sexual intercourse (penile-vaginal penetration) without a woman's consent (Buss 2014; Thornhill and Palmer 2000). There are two likely evolutionary hypotheses for why men commit rape: rape as a specialized male adaptation (Thornhill and Palmer 2000) and rape as a by-product of other male adaptations (Symons 1979). The human rape-adaptation hypothesis describes a specialized psychological adaptation in which the inclination to sexually aggress against women evolved in male psychology but is only deployed in particular circumstances. For a specialized rape psychology to have been selected, the benefits to ancestral men must have outweighed the associated costs (e.g., although ancestral men may face a physically aggressive husband or partner after committing rape against a woman, they may nevertheless have increased their reproductive success by copulating with an additional woman; McKibbin et al. 2008). In sum, rape may have been ancestrally adaptive when males were able to circumvent female choice and increase their mating opportunities.

In contrast, the by-product hypothesis of rape (Symons 1979) suggests that rape was not selected for but is a by-product of other male evolved psychological mechanisms. In other words, there is no male evolved psychological mechanism specialized to motivate rape because such a mechanism would not have produced net

reproductive benefits ancestrally. Symons (1979) suggested that rape is a by-product of adaptations designed to secure sexual access from consenting partners. Specifically, deviations of male psychological mechanisms for desire for sexual variety/novelty, psychological sensitivity to mating opportunities, desire for uncommitted and minimal investment short-term mating, and the general inclination to use physical aggression may inadvertently and as a by-product lead to instances of rape.

The mate deprivation hypothesis of rape, which proposes that men who have little or no sexual access to desirable mates may be more inclined to use sexually coercive tactics, has received inconsistent empirical support (Lalumière et al. 1996). Other researchers suggest that there are several types of rapists (McKibbin et al. 2008), which may shed light on why there has been inconsistent support of the mate deprivation hypothesis. McKibbin et al. (2008) identify five distinct categories of rapists: disadvantaged men who resort to rape, specialized rapists who are sexually aroused by violent or forceful sex, men who rape opportunistically, high-mating-effort men who exhibit psychopathic tendencies, and partner rapists motivated by actual or suspected risk of sperm competition (e.g., by female sexual infidelity).

It is important to note that although female choice may be thwarted by male sexual aggression, it is possible that women have evolved mechanisms that motivate them to prefer sexually aggressive men. Because men who use sexually coercive behavior may be more reproductively successful over human evolutionary history, women may desire that trait in their own male offspring. For example, one study found that sexually coercive men have consensual sex at an earlier age and have more consensual sex partners than do noncoercive men (Koss and Dinero 1988). This is not to argue that women generally prefer men who rape. In fact, women may also have evolved psychological mechanisms to defend against rape. For instance, Buss (2006) suggests that women's aversion to and intense fear of rape may have been selected because sexual aggression by men has been a recurrent adaptation women have faced over evolutionary history.

Rape Outside of the Context of Intimate Relationships

Rapist Types

First, regarding McKibbin et al. (2008)'s hypothesized rapist types, the fact that disadvantaged men sometimes resort to rape aligns with the description of the mate deprivation hypothesis. This type of rapist includes men who lack or have limited sexual opportunities or cannot access consenting women (Lalumière et al. 1996; Thornhill and Palmer 2000). Disadvantaged men who rape depend on a context-sensitive motivation for rape, engaging in sexual aggression when deprived of mates by normal means. For example, men in lower socioeconomic status brackets commit a disproportionate number of rapes (Thornhill and Thornhill 1983). In this context, men who lack the resources to secure mates may resort to sexual aggression to achieve mating opportunities. Thornhill and Palmer (2000) suggest that an evolved psychology may motivate instances of rape when men lack resources and/or sexual access to mates.

Second, opportunistic rapists are men who may initially engage consensually with sexually receptive women but resort to sexual aggression when the woman changes her mind or if the possibility of retaliation for rape is low (McKibbin et al. 2008). Opportunistic rapists may be especially inclined to rape when the victim is vulnerable (e.g., during warfare). However, there is little evidence that supports the opportunistic rapist profile directly.

Third, high-mating-effort rapists are hypothesized to be sexually experienced rapists who are aggressive, dominant, have high self-esteem, and psychopathic traits (McKibbin et al. 2008). Unlike disadvantaged men who rape, high-mating-effort rapists do not have difficulty accessing consenting women. Specifically, psychopathic men use high-mating-effort strategies to gain sexual access without much investment, only resorting to sexual aggression when their other tactics do not succeed.

Lastly, McKibbin et al. (2008) discuss "specialized" rapists who report sexual arousal in response to violent or aggressive sexual stimuli.

Specialized rapists may have an evolved psychology or arousal pattern in which they experience more rapid ejaculation during rape. Thornhill and Palmer (2000) suggest that a more rapid arousal and ejaculation pattern during rape may have been successful, compared to men who did not exhibit that pattern, because the rapist may avoid retaliation and other possible costs of detection. Additionally, specialized rapists may have evolved psychological adaptations which assess vulnerability of victims, preference for fertile women, and high quantity ejaculates.

Assessment of Vulnerability of Victims

Women who are targets of sexual aggression or rape may be chosen by men because of a psychological mechanism that motivate assessments of the associated risks and benefits of sexual coercion (e.g., "specialized" rapists; Thornhill and Palmer 2000). For example, during warfare, a woman might not have protection from kin or a long-term partner, and a prospective rapist might recognize this and target that woman. In this context, the rape as adaptation hypothesis suggests that men have evolved a vulnerability-detection mechanism specifically designed to assess potential rape victims (Thornhill and Palmer 2000). However, evidence suggesting that men have an evolved psychology that functions specifically to evaluate a woman's vulnerability to rape is insufficient. In line with the by-product hypothesis of rape, it is possible that men evaluate potential rape victims according to an evolved cost-benefit evaluation mechanism that is not specific to rape (Thornhill and Palmer 2000). In sum, neither the rape-as-adaptation nor rape-as-byproduct hypothesis is uniquely supported by the evidence that women experience sexual aggression or rape in contexts in which they are more vulnerable.

Ejaculate Quality in Rape

Thornhill and Palmer (2000) suggest that there may be an increase in quality of rape ejaculates compared to ejaculates produced during consensual sex. Particularly, an adaptation in men to increase ejaculate quality during rape may be related to sperm competition. An evolved ability to influence ejaculate quality in the context of rape

may increase the likelihood of fertilization. If men who rape are able to provide a higher quality ejaculate to the victim, their ejaculate would be better equipped to deal with the higher likelihood of sperm competition. For example, given that attractiveness and youthfulness in women are valuable to men, a highly desirable, young woman may already have a long-term partner whose sperm is already inside her. A rapist may increase their success in sperm competition by introducing a higher quality ejaculate (e.g., more sperm) into the woman.

Age of the Woman

If rape is an adaptation that increased ancestral male reproductive success, one might expect that rapists would target fertile, reproductive-aged women, as opposed to nonfertile women. Similar to men's use of physical aggression against women, men who rape primarily target young women (Thornhill and Thornhill 1983). Fertility peaks in the mid-20s and women who are raped are disproportionately in that youthful, reproductive age bracket (Thornhill and Palmer 2000). It is possible that a victim-preference mechanism, such as a desire to copulate with younger, more attractive women, may have increased the ancestral reproductive benefits of rape. However, men's preference for reproductive-age women also aligns with the by-product hypothesis of rape given that the preference for young, reproductive-age women is exemplified in both men's choice of consensual partners and rape victims. In sum, the age of the woman is related to rape prevalence but does not address whether rape is motivated by specialized adaptation or as a by-product of other evolved mechanisms.

Rape in the Context of Intimate Relationships

Between 10% and 26% of married women report experiencing rape by their husbands (McKibbin et al. 2008). According to some researchers (Goetz and Shackelford 2006; Thornhill and Palmer 2000), partner rape may be motivated by sperm competition. In the context of suspected or actual sexual infidelity, men may rape their

partners in an effort to successfully compete with a rival's sperm. Partner-rape may be an anti-cuckoldry strategy used by men to decrease their paternity uncertainty and risk of cuckoldry. In line with this hypothesis, women are especially at risk of rape by a partner who reports concern about the woman's sexual fidelity during or immediately following a break-up (Thornhill and Palmer 2000). In this context, faced with potential desertion or abandonment to a rival, men may rape their partner (or ex-partner) to achieve fertilization of a woman who no longer grants them sexual access. Additionally, one study found that men mated to women who have committed sexual infidelity or were suspected to have committed sexual infidelity were more likely to use a variety of sexually aggressive tactics, including physical force and rape (Goetz and Shackelford 2006). Related to the possibility that a man might adjust his ejaculate in a rape context, partnered men also might produce higher quality ejaculates when they rape their partner (compared to ejaculates produced during consensual sex with their partner), in an effort to address perceived greater risk of sperm competition.

Conclusion

Men use distinct methods of physical and sexual aggression for particular reproductive reasons. Men use physical aggression against women to address recurrent adaptive problems of female sexual infidelity, paternity uncertainty, and exclusive sexual access. Although selection may have favored men's use of physical aggression, female aggression may have been mostly unfavorable to women's ancestral reproductive success. Additionally, men use sexual aggression against women to gain sexual access to young, reproductive-age women, to circumvent investment, and to avoid male-male competition. In instances of partner-rape, men use sexual aggression to combat the risk of cuckoldry by engaging in sperm competition. Women rarely use sexual aggression against men. Because women are a valuable reproductive resource that invests heavily in offspring, women do not compete as intensely for sexual access to men. We caution

that although men's aggression against women may have been selected over evolutionary time, this does not mean that this aggression is morally good or defensible. It is not. Intimate partner violence, homicide, and rape are global problems that affect women in devastating ways (e.g., contracting sexually transmitted infections, physical ailments, etc.). Some researchers suggest that further inquiry surrounding domestic violence and physical assault may assist in discovering solutions to combat it (Perilla et al. 2011). Additionally, other researchers suggest that rape prevention programs and policies must gauge proximate and ultimate causes of sexual coercion, as well as incorporate more comprehensive, multilevel strategies that incorporate genetic, social, and behavioral understanding (Knight and Sims-Knight 2011).

Cross-References

- ▶ [Aggression for Sexual Access](#)
- ▶ [Female Age as a Predictor of Men's Aggression](#)
- ▶ [Female Infidelity](#)
- ▶ [Homicide Adaptation Theory](#)
- ▶ [Paternity Uncertainty](#)

References

- Blake, K. R., Bastian, B., & Denson, T. F. (2017). Heightened male aggression toward sexualized women following romantic rejection: The mediating role of sex goal activation. *Aggressive Behavior, 44*(1), 40–49. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ab.21722>.
- Buss, D. M. (1989). Conflict between the sexes: Strategic interference and the evocation of anger and upset. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 56*(5), 735–747.
- Buss, D. M. (2000). *The dangerous passion: Why jealousy is as necessary as love and sex*. New York: Free Press.
- Buss, D. M. (2006). *The murderer next door: Why the mind is designed to kill*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Buss, D. M. (2014). *Evolutionary psychology*. New York: Taylor & Francis.
- Buss, D. M., & Shackelford, T. K. (1997). Human aggression in evolutionary psychological perspective. *Clinical Psychology Review, 17*(6), 605–619.
- Buss, D. M., Larsen, R. J., Westen, D., & Semmelroth, J. (1992). Sex differences in jealousy evolution, physiology, and psychology. *Psychological Science, 3*(4), 251–255.
- Cross, C. P., & Campbell, A. (2011). Womens aggression. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 16*(5), 390–398.
- Daly, M., & Wilson, M. (1988). *Homicide*. New York: Aldine De Gruyter.
- Downey, G., Feldman, S., & Ayduk, O. (2000). Rejection sensitivity and male violence in romantic relationships. *Personal Relationships, 7*(1), 45–61.
- Easteal, P. W. (1993). Homicide between adult sexual intimates: A research agenda. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology, 26*(1), 3–18.
- Goetz, A. T., & Shackelford, T. K. (2006). Sexual coercion and forced in-pair copulation in humans as sperm competition tactics in humans. *Human Nature, 17*, 265–282.
- Goetz, A. T., Shackelford, T. K., Romero, G. A., Kaighobadi, F., & Miner, E. J. (2008). Punishment, proprietariness, and paternity: Men's violence against women from an evolutionary perspective. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 13*(6), 481–489.
- Knight, R., & Sims-Knight, J. (2011). Risk factors for sexual assault. In *Violence against women and children* (Vol. 1, pp. 125–150). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Koss, M. P., & Dinero, T. E. (1988). Predictors of sexual aggression among a national sample of male college students. In R. A. Prentky & V. L. Quinsey (Eds.), *Human sexual aggression: Current perspectives* (pp. 133–147). New York: New York Academy of Sciences.
- Lalumière, M. L., Chalmers, L. J., Quinsey, V. L., & Seto, M. C. (1996). A test of the mate deprivation hypothesis of sexual coercion. *Ethology and Sociobiology, 17*(5), 299–318.
- McKibbin, W. F., Shackelford, T. K., Goetz, A. T., & Starratt, V. G. (2008). Why do men rape? An evolutionary psychological perspective. *Review of General Psychology, 12*, 86–97.
- Perilla, J., Lippy, C., Rosales, A., & Serrata, J. (2011). Prevalence of domestic violence. In *Violence against women and children* (Vol. 1, pp. 199–220). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Shackelford, T. K., Buss, D. M., & Peters, J. (2000). Wife killing: Risk to women as a function of age. *Violence and Victims, 15*(3), 273–282.
- Shackelford, T. K., Goetz, A. T., Buss, D. M., Euler, H. A., & Hoier, S. (2005). When we hurt the ones we love: Predicting violence against women from men's mate retention. *Personal Relationships, 12*(4), 447–463.
- Smuts, B. (1992). Male aggression against women. *Human Nature, 3*(1), 1–44.
- Symons, D. (1979). *The evolution of human sexuality*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Thornhill, R., & Palmer, C. (2000). *A natural history of rape: Biological bases of sexual coercion*. Cambridge, MA: MIT.
- Thornhill, R., & Thornhill, N. W. (1983). Human rape: An evolutionary analysis. *Ethology and Sociobiology, 4*(3), 137–173.