

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE POSITIVE RELATIONS BETWEEN BENEVOLENT
SEXISM, SYSTEM JUSTIFICATION, AND LIFE SATISFACTION

By

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To my wonderful parents and my amazing sister for always supporting my dreams

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | <u>page</u> |
|--|-------------|
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS..... | 4 |
| LIST OF TABLES..... | 6 |
| LIST OF FIGURES..... | 7 |
| ABSTRACT | 8 |
| CHAPTER | |
| 1 INTRODUCTION | 9 |
| Benevolent and Hostile Sexism | 11 |
| System Justification Theory | 13 |
| The System-Justifying Effect of Benevolent Sexism..... | 14 |
| The Present Study | 18 |
| 2 METHOD | 21 |
| Participants | 21 |
| Measures | 21 |
| Benevolent and Hostile Sexism..... | 21 |
| Diffuse System Justification..... | 22 |
| Life Satisfaction | 23 |
| Procedure | 24 |
| 3 RESULTS | 25 |
| Structural Equation Modeling..... | 25 |
| Measurement Model..... | 26 |
| Structural (Hypothesized) Model | 27 |
| Indirect effects..... | 27 |
| Partially mediated model..... | 28 |
| Comparisons of model for women and men | 28 |
| 4 DISCUSSION | 36 |
| Benevolent Sexism | 37 |
| Hostile Sexism | 41 |
| Limitations and Future Research | 42 |
| REFERENCES..... | 45 |
| BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH..... | 51 |

LIST OF TABLES

| <u>Table</u> | | <u>page</u> |
|--------------|---|-------------|
| 3-1 | Means, standard deviations, and independent t-tests for study variables. | 31 |
| 3-2 | Bivariate correlations among study variables. | 32 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| <u>Figure</u> | <u>page</u> |
|--|-------------|
| 3-1 Structural model depicting the associations found among study variables for total sample. | 33 |
| 3-2 Structural model depicting the associations found among study variables for women..... | 34 |
| 3-3 Structural model depicting the associations found among study variables for men. | 35 |

Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School
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Previous research suggests that benevolent sexism is a legitimizing ideology that helps rationalize inequality between men and women (Jost & Kay, 2005). The current study expands on this research by testing whether benevolently sexist beliefs are related to increased system justifying-beliefs and life satisfaction for both men and women, as predicted by system justification theory (Jost & Banaji, 1994). A structural equation model revealed that benevolent sexism is indirectly associated with higher life satisfaction for both men and women through increased system-justifying beliefs. In contrast, the results suggest that hostile sexism is unrelated to system-justifying beliefs for men and negatively related to system-justifying beliefs for women. The findings emphasize benevolent sexism's ability to serve as a broader system-justifying ideology.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

In 2010, Blayne Bennett, president of the Network of Enlightened Women (NeW) at Arizona State University, appeared on *Good Morning! Arizona*. Bennett promoted her chapter's Second Annual Gentleman's Showcase, an event honoring the ten most chivalrous men at ASU. A "gentlemanly act" ranged from opening a door for a woman to lending a "damsel in distress" money for printing. "I get to read the nominations people submit, and I get a huge grin on my face the whole time," Bennet told the program's host (Beardley, 2010).

When the host asked Bennet what might be contributing to a lack of chivalry, Bennett responded, "The radical feminist movement has really kind of put us in a Catch-22... Men are told that if they're chivalrous, it could be demeaning to women... and women are told we need to be really independent and self-sufficient... But when we asked the campus, we got a different answer. Women want to be treated like ladies" (Beardley, 2010).

Since Bennett's appearance on *Good Morning! Arizona* in 2010, NeW, a club for conservative women with 24 chapters in college campuses across the nation, has instituted the Gentlemen's Showcase as a national event taking place every spring. According to NeW's national website, "the respect for femininity is deteriorating... and we want to honor those that stand against cultural norms and demonstrate gentlemanly behavior" (Network of Enlightened Women, 2010).

NeW's Gentleman's Showcase and the attitudes expressed by Bennett on *Good Morning! Arizona* emphasize the existence of benevolent sexism on university campuses. According to ambivalent sexism theory, benevolent sexism is "a set of

interrelated attitudes toward women that are sexist in terms of viewing woman stereotypically and in restricted roles but that are subjectively positive” (Glick & Fiske, 1996, p. 491). Although benevolent sexism might seem harmless and even desirable to women, it has been associated with a range of negative consequences for women, including poorer task performance (Dardenne, Dumont, & Bollier, 2007; Dumont, Sarlet, & Dardenne, 2010; Vescio, Gervais, Snyder, & Hoover, 2005) and increased feelings of incompetence and self-doubt (Dardenne et al., 2007; Dumont et al., 2010).

Benevolently sexist beliefs are also associated with attitudes that excuse sexual harassment, domestic violence, and rape (Abrams, Viki, Masser, & Bohner, 2003; Fiske & Glick, 1995; Glick, Sakalli-Ugurlu, Ferreira, & Souza, 2002; Pryor, Geidd, & Williams, 1995; Viki & Abrams, 2002).

However, few studies have investigated why women and men might be motivated to hold benevolently sexist attitudes. System justification theory (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost & Hunyady, 2005) offers a potential explanation for why women and men alike might endorse benevolent sexism. According to system justification theory, possessing ideologies that legitimize the current social system promotes life satisfaction by increasing one’s sense that the world has order and structure (Jost & Hunyady, 2005). Research suggests that benevolent sexism is, indeed, a victim-enhancing ideology that rationalizes the status quo by suggesting that men and women have separate but equal roles (Jost & Kay, 2005). However, no study to date has examined whether possessing benevolent sexism is related to the perception that society is fair and, in turn, life satisfaction. Therefore, the purpose of the present study is to investigate if system

justification theory might offer a potential explanation for why women and men might hold benevolently sexist beliefs.

Benevolent and Hostile Sexism

According to ambivalent sexism theory (Glick & Fiske, 1996, 2001), attitudes toward women have both hostile and benevolent components. Hostile sexism is consistent with Allport's (1954) concept of prejudice as antipathy: It is an openly antagonistic and adversarial ideology that derogates women for trying to steal power from men through sexuality or feminism, for unnecessarily complaining about sexism, and for failing to appreciate men (Glick & Fiske, 1996, 2001).

In contrast, benevolent sexism is a seemingly flattering ideology that idealizes women in traditionally feminine roles (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Benevolent sexism celebrates complementary, traditional gender roles involving a delicate, kind female nurturer and a strong, competent male protector (Glick & Whitehead, 2010). Benevolent sexism's complementary portrayal of gender roles suggests that each gender has unique strengths that compensate for the other's weaknesses: Women are warm, caring and nurturing (but weak and incompetent), whereas men are intelligent, strong, and independent (but cold and uncaring). This complementary portrayal of gender roles suggests that men and women both depend on each other. By suggesting that women are kind and delicate, benevolent sexism implies that women need stronger, more competent men to survive. But benevolent sexism also suggests that men need women's love and care to be complete (Glick & Fiske, 1996, 2001). Benevolent sexism's construal of gender roles is consistent with decades of research on the complementary nature of traditional gender attitudes (e.g. Eagly & Mladinic, 1993; Prentice & Carranza, 2002; Williams & Best, 1990).

Research suggests that both men and women consider benevolent sexism to be less offensive than hostile sexism. For instance, Barreto and Ellemers (2005), Bohner, Ahlborn, and Steiner (2010), and Kilianski and Rudman (1998) found that benevolent sexists are perceived as less sexist and more likeable. Similarly, Swim, Mallett, Russo-Devosa, and Stangor (2005) found that both women and men considered benevolently sexist statements to be less sexist than hostilely sexist statements.

However, benevolent sexism is far from innocuous. Although the communal traits associated with women might seem flattering, research suggests that benevolent sexism reinforces women's subordination and subjugation. For instance, exposing women to benevolent sexism has been associated with poorer task performance (Adams, Garcia, Purdie-Vaughns, & Steele, 2006; Dardenne et al., 2007; Dumont et al., 2010; Vescio et al., 2005), increased feelings of incompetence and self-doubt (Dardenne et al., 2007; Dumont et al., 2010), more submissive behavior (Moya et al., 2007), increased self-objectification (Calogero & Jost, 2011; Shepherd, Erchull, Rosner, Taubenberger, Forsyth Queen, & McKee, 2010), and decreased motivation to engage in collective action to reduce gender discrimination (Becker & Wright, 2011). Additionally, benevolently sexist beliefs are related to attitudes that excuse sexual harassment (Fiske & Glick, 1995; Pryor et al., 1995), beliefs that justify domestic violence (Glick et al., 2002; Sakalli, 2002), and negative reactions to victims of rape (Abrams et al., 2003; Viki & Abrams, 2002) among both men and women. Thus, past research suggests that although benevolent sexism may be experienced as flattering, it is indeed pernicious.

System Justification Theory

Benevolent sexism might be particularly pernicious because it helps justify and legitimize existing social inequality. System justification theory proposes that individuals are motivated to adopt ideologies that defend the current social system as fair, just, and legitimate (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004; Jost & Hunyady, 2005). According to this theory, viewing society and its institutions as legitimate promotes a sense of order, structure, and security (Jost, Pelham, Sheldon, & Sullivan, 2003).

Consistent with this theory, research suggests that defending the status quo has hedonic benefits: System-justifying beliefs are related to increased life satisfaction, increased positive affect, and decreased negative affect for both advantaged and disadvantaged groups (Jost & Hunyady, 2002; Jost et al., 2003; Major, 1994; Napier & Jost, 2008; O'Brien & Major, 2005; Rankin, Jost, & Wakslak, 2009; Wakslak, Jost, Tyler, & Chen, 2007). The extant literature suggests that people may be motivated to justify an unfair society and its institutions because doing so serves a palliative function, or, in other words, increase life satisfaction (Napier et al., 2010).

Research has generally focused on the system-justifying effect of victim-derogating ideologies, or belief systems that emphasize how members of low-status groups are responsible for their disadvantaged social position (Kay et al., 2005). For instance, belief in a just world is a victim-derogating ideology that promotes the sense that society is fair by suggesting that the privileged deserve their higher status because of their hard work or greater skill. In turn, it suggests that the underprivileged deserve their lower status because of their lack of work ethic, laziness, or stupidity (Lerner, 1980).

However, research suggests that victim-enhancing ideologies involving complementary beliefs about members of advantaged or disadvantaged groups are also effective in promoting system justification (Jost & Kay, 2005; Kay & Jost, 2003; Kay, Jost, & Young, 2005). Victim-enhancing ideologies suggest that because the advantaged and disadvantaged groups possess balanced positive and negative traits, the overall system is just. Therefore, these ideologies “portray a system, in other words, that is fair and ‘balanced’ because no group ‘has it all’ and no group is bereft of valued characteristics” (Kay et al., 2009, p. 290). The stereotype that the poor are happy whereas the rich are miserable is one example of a complementary belief that promotes a sense of social fairness; Kay and Jost (2003) found that experimentally exposing participants to this stereotype led to increased system justification.

The System-Justifying Effect of Benevolent Sexism

Glick and Fiske (2001) argue that benevolent sexism helps legitimize gender inequality by justifying gender roles and flattering women into tolerating an unfair system. By emphasizing men’s competence and women’s warmth, benevolent sexism suggests that men are naturally suited for high-status leadership roles whereas women are suited for low-status domestic roles. In addition, Glick and Fiske (2001) underscore that by flattering women, benevolent sexism “may reduce women’s resistance to patriarchy” (p. 111). This echoes Jackman’s (1994) argument that flattering stereotypes about women’s warmth disarm women into cooperating within a sexist system.

Consistent with Glick and Fiske’s (2001) argument that benevolent sexism should justify and rationalize specific relations between men and women, previous research has focused on how benevolent sexism relates to gender-specific system justification, or the belief that relations between men and women are fair (Jost & Kay, 2005). For

instance, Jost and Kay (2005) found that exposing women to benevolent sexism increased gender-specific system justification. Exposure to hostile sexism did not increase gender-specific system justification, suggesting that hostile sexism does not promote gender-specific system justification. The authors did not find this effect for men, who reported high levels of gender-specific system justification across conditions. In addition, Glick and Whitehead (2010) found that among both men and women, benevolent sexism is correlated with the belief that gender relations are fair. Similarly, Hammond and Sibley (2011) found that gender-specific system justification fully mediated the relation between benevolent sexism and life satisfaction for women and partially mediated the association between benevolent sexism and life satisfaction for men. Finally, Becker and Wright (2011) found that exposure to benevolent sexism was positively related to gender-specific system justification, which mediated a link between exposure to benevolent sexism and decreased desire to promote social change. These findings are consistent with Tajfel's (1981) argument that stereotypes help rationalize specific aspects of intergroup relations—in this case, interactions between men and women.

But benevolent sexism might not only help legitimize and rationalize relations between men and women. Because benevolent sexism emphasizes the “complementary but equal” (Bem & Bem, 1970, p. 96) roles of men and women, system justification theory suggests that this ideology might contribute to the view that the overall social system is fair. As Jost and Kay (2005) note, “[f]rom a system justification perspective, the belief that every group in society possesses some advantages and some disadvantages should increase the sense that the system as a whole is fair,

balanced, and legitimate” (p. 499). Just as complementary stereotypes of the rich and poor make society seem fair (Kay & Jost, 2003), complementary stereotypes about men and women should contribute to the sense that the overall social structure is legitimate. Thus, system justification theory predicts that benevolently sexist beliefs should not only help justify women’s roles in society and flatter them into cooperation. Such beliefs should also serve a broader system-justifying purpose and make society as a whole appear fair (Jost & Kay, 2005). By underscoring the complementary roles of both genders, benevolent sexism should, in turn, promote life satisfaction for both members of the high-status group (men) as well as members of the low-status group (women; Jost & Hunyady, 2005).

Supporting this idea, Jost and Kay (2005) found that exposing female participants to benevolently sexist statements, rather than hostilely sexist or neutral statements, increased their general or diffuse system justification. Priming did not impact men’s diffuse system justification as men reported high levels of diffuse system justification across conditions. Similarly, Napier et al. (2010) found that statements from the World Values Survey that appeared similar to items measuring benevolent sexism from Glick and Fiske’s (1996) ambivalent sexism inventory were positively related to life satisfaction for both men and women in relatively gender egalitarian countries. In contrast, they found that statements similar to hostile sexism were negatively related to life satisfaction for men and unrelated to life satisfaction for women. These results suggest that benevolently sexist beliefs might have the palliative effect associated with system-justifying ideologies.

Glick and Fiske (2001) argue that hostile sexism helps rationalize gender inequality by delegitimizing women's complaints about sexism and by criticizing women who do not conform to the feminine norms extolled in benevolent sexism. Consistent with the argument that hostile sexism might contribute to gender-specific system justification, Glick and Whitehead (2010) found that, among both men and women, hostile sexism was positively correlated with the belief that the gender system is fair. However, other research has not found consistent evidence that hostile sexism is related to gender-specific or diffuse system justification. As mentioned, Jost and Kay (2005) found that exposure to hostile sexism had no effect on gender-specific or diffuse system justification for women or men. Indeed, Napier et al. (2010) found that hostile sexism is negatively related to life satisfaction for men and unrelated to life satisfaction for women, suggesting that it does not have the palliative effect associated with system-justifying ideologies. Similarly, Becker and Wright (2011) found that exposure to hostile sexism led to decreased gender-system justification among women, which mediated the link between exposure to hostile sexism and increased desire for social change. Thus, future research is needed to determine if hostilely sexist attitudes are indeed negatively related to system justification.

According to system justification theory, hostile sexism would not be an effective system-justifying ideology. Unlike benevolent sexism or other victim-enhancing ideologies, hostile sexism does not emphasize the complementary characteristics of low-status and high-status group members. In addition, unlike effective system-justifying victim-derogating ideologies like belief in a just world, hostile sexism does not offer a causal reason for why women deserve their lower social-status. Given the

importance of the discourse of gender equality in America, it is possible that hostile sexism is simply too antagonistic toward women to consistently serve a system-justifying function (Napier et al., 2010). Therefore, although hostile sexism might help rationalize some aspects of inequality between men and women by delegitimizing women's complaints about inequality and derogating women who do not conform to the gender system (Glick & Fiske, 2001; Glick & Whitehead, 2010), system justification theory would not predict that it would function as a broader system-justifying ideology.

The Present Study

Although research has begun to explore how benevolent sexism rationalizes inequality, no study to date has tested system justification theory's prediction that possessing benevolently sexist attitudes should be positively associated with the sense that society as a whole is fair for both women and men. Similarly, no study has tested system justification theory's prediction that endorsing benevolent sexism is positively related to life satisfaction for both genders because it contributes to the sense that the overall social system seem just.

Therefore, the primary purpose of present study is to use structural equation modeling (SEM) to explore the extent to which benevolent gender attitudes are associated with life satisfaction for both women and men through increased diffuse system-justifying beliefs. Consistent with system justification theory and previous research (Jost & Kay, 2005; Napier et al., 2010), I predict that for both women and men, benevolent sexism will be related to increased diffuse system-justifying beliefs (Hypothesis 1a). I also predict that diffuse system-justifying beliefs will be positively related to life satisfaction (Hypothesis 1b). In turn, I predict that benevolent sexism will have a positive indirect link to life satisfaction through diffuse system-justifying beliefs

for both genders. In other words, I predict that diffuse system-justifying beliefs will fully mediate the relation between benevolent sexism and life satisfaction for both women and men (Hypothesis 1c). An important contribution of the present study would be offering a more parsimonious model explaining the association between benevolent sexism, system justification, and life satisfaction. As previously mentioned, Hammond and Sibley (2011) tested a model explaining the relation between benevolent sexism and life satisfaction with gender-specific system justification. The authors' results supported a differential process model: Gender-specific system justification fully mediated the relation between benevolent sexism and life satisfaction for women but only partially mediated the association between benevolent sexism and life satisfaction for men. However, system justification theory suggests that the process through which benevolent sexism promotes life satisfaction should be the same for both genders. By increasing the sense that society as a whole is fair, benevolently sexist beliefs should have a palliative effect for both men and women. Therefore, the present study tests a more comprehensive and parsimonious explanation for the relation between benevolent sexism and life satisfaction.

The secondary purpose of the present study is to clarify how hostile sexism relates to diffuse system justification and life satisfaction. Previous research generally suggests that hostile sexism is not positively related to system justification or life satisfaction (Hammond & Sibley, 2011; Jost & Kay, 2005; Napier et al., 2010), although one study found that hostile sexism is positively related to perceptions that the gender system is fair (Glick & Whitehead, 2010). In addition, research is mixed concerning whether hostile sexism is negative or non-significantly related to system justification and

life satisfaction. The present study hopes to test system justification theory's prediction that hostile sexism should not promote the sense that society as a whole is fair because it does not have the characteristics of an effective victim-enhancing or victim-derogating ideology (Kay et al., 2005). Therefore, I predict that hostile sexism will not be positively related to diffuse system justification (Hypothesis 2a) or life satisfaction (Hypothesis 2b) for women or men.

Finally, I predict a positive association between benevolent and hostile sexism, as found in previous research (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Glick et al., 2000; Hypothesis 3).

CHAPTER 2 METHOD

Participants

The participants were 379 undergraduates (271 women, 108 men) from a large southeastern public university in the United States. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 80 years old ($M = 19.89$, $Mdn = 19.0$, $SD = 3.73$). Within the sample, 64% identified as White, 7% as Black, 14% as Hispanic or Latino/a, 8% as Asian or Asian-American, 1% as American Indian, 1% as Pacific Islander, 4% as multiracial, and 2% as other. Eighty-five percent identified as exclusively heterosexual, 9% as mostly heterosexual, 2% as bisexual, 1% as mostly gay/lesbian, 3% as exclusively gay/lesbian, and 1% as other. Forty-six percent of the participants were first-year college students, 22% were second-year students, 19% were third-year students, 11% were fourth-year students, 2% were fifth-year students, and 1% identified as other. Three percent identified as upper class, 33% identified as upper-middle class, 42% identified as middle class, 17% identified as working class, 5% identified as lower class, and 1% identified as other. Demographic percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Measures

Benevolent and Hostile Sexism

Benevolent and hostile sexism were assessed with the 22-item Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Eleven items assessed benevolent sexism and 11 assessed hostile sexism. A sample item for benevolent sexism is, "Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess." A sample item for hostile sexism is, "Women seek to gain power by getting control over men." Participants indicated how much they agreed with each item on a six-point scale ranging from 0 (*disagree strongly*)

to 6 (*agree strongly*). A mean benevolent sexism score and a mean hostile sexism score were calculated from the 11 items assessing each construct, with higher scores reflecting higher levels of benevolent or hostile sexism.

Glick and Fiske (1996) found that benevolent sexism and hostile sexism demonstrated good reliability and validity. They found that the scale for benevolent sexism was reliable, with alphas ranging from .75 to .85 across four student samples. Supporting its validity, the authors found that benevolent sexism was not significantly related to other measures of blatant sexism, such as the Attitudes Toward Women Scale (Spence & Helmreich, 1972) or the Old Fashioned Sexism Scale (Swim, Aiken, Hall, & Hunter, 1995), after controlling for hostile sexism. Additionally, Glick, Diebold, Bailey-Werner, & Zhu (1997) found that benevolent sexism was related to positive attitudes toward traditional women (i.e., homemakers) among men. In the present sample, Cronbach's alpha for benevolent sexism was .86.

For hostile sexism, Glick and Fiske (1996) found that the scale was reliable, with alphas ranging from .80 to .92 across four student samples. In terms of the validity of hostile sexism, the authors found that hostile sexism is moderately correlated with other measures of blatant sexism, including the Attitudes Toward Women Scale (Spence & Helmreich, 1972), the Old Fashioned Sexism Scale (Swim et al., 1995). Glick et al. (1997) also found that among both men and women, hostile sexism is related to negative attitudes toward nontraditional women (i.e., career women). In the present sample, Cronbach's alpha for hostile sexism was .90

Diffuse System Justification

Participants completed an eight-item measure of diffuse system justification assessing perceptions that society as a whole is fair and just (Jost & Kay, 2005; Kay &

Jost, 2003). A sample item is, "In general, you find society to be fair." Participants indicated how much they agreed with each item on a nine-point scale ranging from 1 (*disagree strongly*) to 9 (*agree strongly*). A mean system justification score was calculated from the participants' responses, with higher scores reflecting greater diffuse system justification. Kay and Jost (2003) found that this measure of diffuse system justification demonstrated adequate reliability, with an alpha of .87 in a sample of students. Supporting the validity of the scale, Kay and Jost (2003) found that diffuse system justification was positively associated with the Global Belief in a Just World Scale (Lipkus, 1991), the Protestant Work Ethic Scale (Quinn and Crocker, 1999), and a general a need for social balance and complementarity in a student sample.

Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction was assessed with the five-item Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). A sample item is, "In most ways my life is close to ideal." Participants indicated how much they agreed with each item on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). A mean score for life satisfaction was calculated from the participants' responses, with higher scores reflecting greater life satisfaction. Diener et al. (1985) demonstrated adequate reliability, with an alpha of .87 in a sample of students. In terms of validity, the authors found that the Satisfaction with Life Scale was positively correlated with happiness and positive affect and negatively correlated with negative affect in a sample of students. In addition, Lucas, Diener, and Suh (1996) found that the scale is positively related to other measures of well-being, including self-esteem and optimism among students. In the present study, the alpha was .87.

Procedure

Undergraduate students in introductory and advanced psychology courses at a large southeastern public university were invited to participate in an online study on happiness and attitudes. Participants from introductory psychology courses were invited to take part in the study through Sona Systems and participated for course credit, while participants from advanced psychology courses were invited via email to participate in the study or to complete a short alternative activity for extra credit. All participants completed the survey online. After providing consent, participants completed the measures of interest in random order to prevent any order effects from occurring. Participants answered the demographic questions at the end of the survey.

CHAPTER 3 RESULTS

The means and standard deviations for the study's primary measures are presented separately for men and women in Table 3-1. Independent *t*-tests revealed that men ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 0.86$) scored higher than women ($M = 3.01$, $SD = 0.89$) on hostile sexism, $t(377) = 5.54$, $p < .01$. This is consistent with previous research suggesting that men reliably score higher than women on hostile sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Glick et al., 1997; Glick et al., 2000; Glick et al., 2002). Men and women did not significantly differ on any other study variable. Table 3-2 presents the bivariate correlations among the study variables.

Structural Equation Modeling

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to test the predicted relations between benevolent sexism, hostile sexism, system-justifying beliefs, and life satisfaction. The analyses were conducted with AMOS 6.0 using maximum likelihood estimation. Cases with missing data were deleted, resulting in the deletion of 6 cases.

As recommended by Weston and Gore (2006), three indicators were used to assess each latent variable. Because benevolent sexism, hostile sexism, system-justification, and life satisfaction were assessed with a single scale, three random parcels were created from the items of each scale to serve as the observed indicators for each of the latent variables in the model. As Russo and Chen (2010) note, this is consistent with Little, Cunningham, Shahar, and Widaman's (2002) suggestion that using parcels as observed indicators is appropriate if the parcels are unidimensional and reliable and if the focus of the research is on the constructs rather than the indicators measuring the constructs.

Weston and Gore's (2006) guidelines were used to judge how well the model fit the data. Excellent model fit requires a comparative fit index (CFI) of .95 or higher, a standardized root-mean-square residual (SRMR) value of .08 or lower, and a root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) value of .06 or lower (Hu & Bentler, 1999). CFI values between .90–.94, SRMR values between .09–.10, and RMSEA values between .07–.10 indicate an acceptable fit. Values outside of these ranges indicate an unacceptable fit.

Because all of the skewness coefficients were less than three and all of the kurtosis coefficients were less than 10, the data met Chou and Bentler's (1995) criteria for univariate normality. Mardia's coefficient was 11.51, exceeding the cutoff of 3.00 and suggesting that the assumption of multivariate normality was not met. Four participants had Mahalanobi's distances significant at $p < .001$. However, because including them did not change the model fit and because SEM is robust to violations of multivariate normality (Kline, 2005), they were included in the sample. The sample size of 379 met Weston and Gore's (2006) recommendation of 10 to 20 participants for every estimated parameter.

Measurement Model

Weston and Gore (2006) recommend conducting an SEM analysis in two steps by first testing the measurement model and then testing the structural (or hypothesized) model. Therefore, the measurement model, which involves conducting a confirmatory factor analysis to determine if the latent variables are properly measured by their observed indicators (Weston & Gore, 2006), was tested first. The results indicate that

the measurement model for the entire sample adequately fit the data, χ^2 (48, $N = 379$) = 64.71, $p = .05$ $CFI = 0.993$, $SRMR = 0.029$, and $RMSEA = 0.030$ (90% CI: .000 – .048).

Structural (Hypothesized) Model

The structural model with standardized regression weights and the unstandardized covariance between benevolent and hostile sexism is depicted in Figure 3-1. The results indicate that the structural model for the entire sample adequately fit the data, χ^2 (50, $N = 379$) = 64.73, $p = .08$, $CFI = 0.994$, $SRMR = 0.029$, and $RMSEA = 0.028$ (90% CI: .000 – .046). Benevolent sexism was positively related to system-justifying beliefs, $\beta = .25$, $z = 2.69$, $p = .01$. Hostile sexism was not significantly related to system-justifying beliefs, $\beta = -.16$, $z = -1.74$, $p = .08$. Also as predicted, system justification was positively related to life satisfaction, $\beta = .19$, $z = 2.54$, $p = .01$. In addition, there was a significant positive covariance between hostile sexism and benevolent sexism, $B = .50$, $z = 8.81$, $p < .001$.

Indirect effects

Bootstrapping was used to test the significance of the indirect effects of benevolent and hostile sexism on life satisfaction. 1,000 bootstrapped samples from the data were created to determine the 95% confidence intervals for the indirect associations between benevolent sexism, hostile sexism, and life satisfaction.

The results suggest that benevolent sexism had a positive indirect effect on life satisfaction through system justification, $B = .06$ (95% CI: .001 – .191), $\beta = .05$, $p = .04$. Hostile sexism did not have a significant indirect effect on life satisfaction through system justification, $B = -.04$ (95% CI: -.154 – .004), $\beta = -.03$, $p = .07$.

Partially mediated model

I predicted that diffuse system justification would fully mediate the relation between benevolent sexism and life satisfaction for both men and women. Thus, I predicted that direct paths from benevolent and hostile sexism would not be significant. To ensure that these paths were indeed non-significant, I tested a partially mediated model including these two additional direct paths. The estimates for the direct paths tested in the partially mediated model are provided in parentheses in Figure 3-1.

The partially mediated model also adequately fit the data, $\chi^2(48, N = 379) = 64.71$, $p = .05$, $CFI = 0.993$, $SRMR = 0.029$, $RMSEA = 0.030$ (90% Confidence Interval: 0.00 – 0.048). As predicted, the direct path from benevolent sexism to life satisfaction was not significant, $\beta = -.01$, $z = -0.13$, $p = .90$. Also as predicted, the direct path from hostile sexism to life satisfaction was not significant, $\beta = .01$, $z = 0.13$, $p = .90$.

A nested model comparison indicated that the partially mediated model did not significantly differ from the fully mediated model, $\Delta\chi^2(2, N = 379) = 0.02$, $p = .99$. Because the direct paths were not significant and did not improve the fit of the model, it appears that the more parsimonious fully mediated model fits the data better.

Comparisons of model for women and men

In order to test if the hypothesized model fit equally well for men and women, I conducted a multiple group analysis testing two nested models. I first tested a baseline model, which did not constrain the covariance and paths to be equal for men and women (Byrne, 2009). The fit of the baseline model was good, $\chi^2(100, N = 379) = 110.66$, $p = .22$, $CFI = 0.995$, $SRMR = 0.037$, $RMSEA = 0.017$ (90% Confidence Interval: 0.00 – 0.003),

I compared the fit of this model to the fit of a model in which all paths, including the covariance between benevolent and hostile sexism, were constrained to be equal for men and women. The model fit was good, $\chi^2(104, N = 379) = 123.57$, $CFI = 0.992$, $SRMR = 0.051$, and $RMSEA = 0.022$ (90% confidence interval: 0.000 – 0.036). Constraining the paths to be equal for men and women resulted in a significant χ^2 difference, $\Delta\chi^2(4, N = 379) = 12.91$, $p = .01$. This suggests that the strengths of the paths differ for men and women.

Following Byrne's (2009) steps for determining which paths differ for men and women, I constrained one covariance or path at a time and then measured the change in χ^2 . If constraining a single path causes a significant increase in χ^2 , this would indicate that the path differs for men and women. If constraining the covariance or path did not cause a significant change in χ^2 , I kept that covariance or path constrained for subsequent tests, as recommended by Byrne (2009).

Constraining the covariance between benevolent and hostile sexism did not result in a significant change in model fit, $\Delta\chi^2(1, N = 379) = 0.94$, $p = .33$, suggesting that the relation between benevolent and hostile sexism is not different for men and women. I next constrained the path from hostility toward women to system justification and found a significant change in chi-square, $\Delta\chi^2(2, N = 379) = 9.33$, $p = .01$. The estimates provided in the baseline model suggest that the relation between hostile sexism and system justification is negative for women, $\beta = -.29$, $z = 2.71$, $p < .01$, but is not significant for men, $\beta = .18$, $z = 1.13$, $p = .26$. Leaving this path unconstrained because it differs for men and women (Byrne, 2009), I next constrained the path from benevolent gender attitudes to system justification, which did not result in a significant change in

chi-square, $\Delta\chi^2(2, N = 379) = 1.64, p = .44$. This suggests that the strength of the relation between benevolent sexism and system justification does not differ for men and women. Leaving this path constrained, I lastly constrained the path from system justification to life satisfaction, which did not result in a significant change in model fit, $\Delta\chi^2(3, N = 379) = 3.24, p = .36$. This suggests that the strength of the relation between system justification and life satisfaction does not differ for men and women. Figure 3-2 depicts the model for women, which is identical to the model in Figure 3-1 except for the significant negative path between hostile sexism and system justification. Figure 3-3 reflects the model for men with the non-significant path between hostile sexism and system justification.

Table 3-1. Means, standard deviations, and independent t-tests for study variables.

| Scale | Women | | Men | | <i>t</i> (377) |
|----------------------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------------|
| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | |
| Benevolent Sexism | 3.36 | 0.92 | 3.51 | 0.80 | 1.47 |
| Hostile Sexism | 3.01 | 0.89 | 3.57 | 0.86 | 5.54*** |
| System Justification | 4.89 | 0.90 | 4.97 | 0.83 | 0.79 |
| Life Satisfaction | 4.88 | 1.27 | 4.87 | 1.09 | -0.01 |

Note: Sample size is 271 women and 108 men. *** $p < .001$.

Table 3-2. Bivariate correlations among study variables.

| | Benevolent Sexism | Hostile Sexism | System Justification | Life Satisfaction |
|----------------------|----------------------|----------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Benevolent Sexism | --- | .57*** | .08 | .02 |
| Hostile Sexism | .46*** | --- | -.09 | -.02 |
| System Justification | .24* | .22* | --- | .12 |
| Life Satisfaction | .08 | .09 | .19* | --- |

Note: Sample size is 271 women and 108 men. Correlations for women are above the diagonal and correlations for men and below. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.

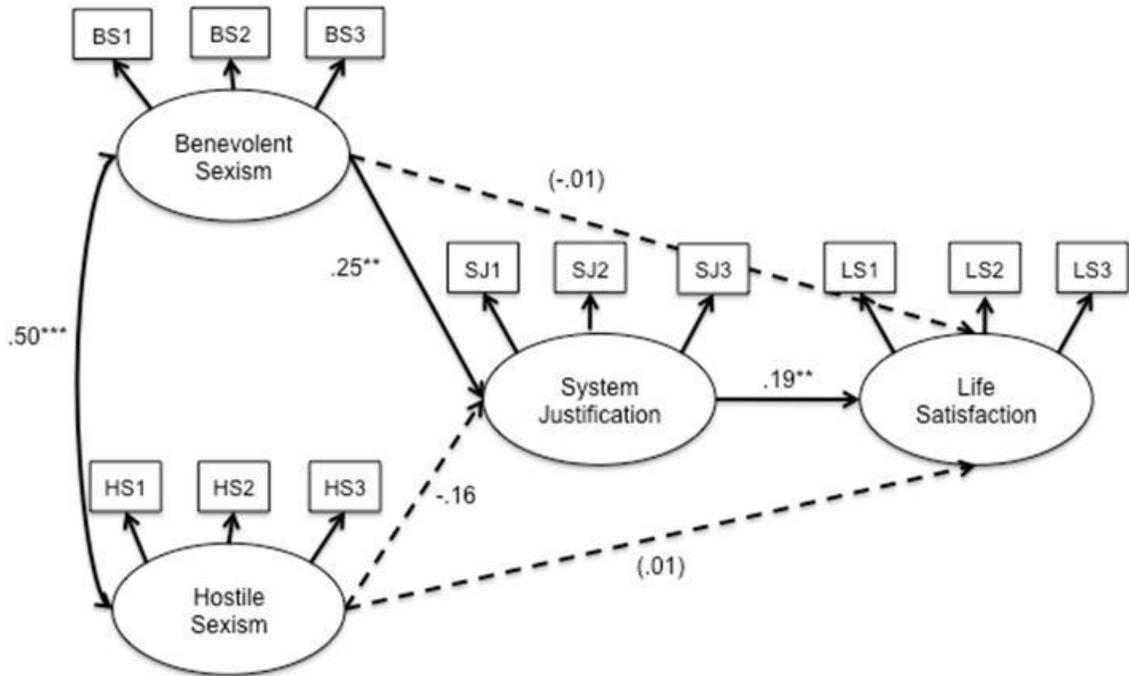


Figure 3-1. Structural model depicting the associations found among study variables for total sample (Note: Standardized coefficients are presented for all directional paths. The covariance between benevolent sexism and hostile sexism is also presented. Dashed paths represent insignificant paths. Estimates in parentheses represent the estimates for the direct paths that were tested in the partially mediated model. $*p < .05$, $**p < .01$, $***p < .001$).

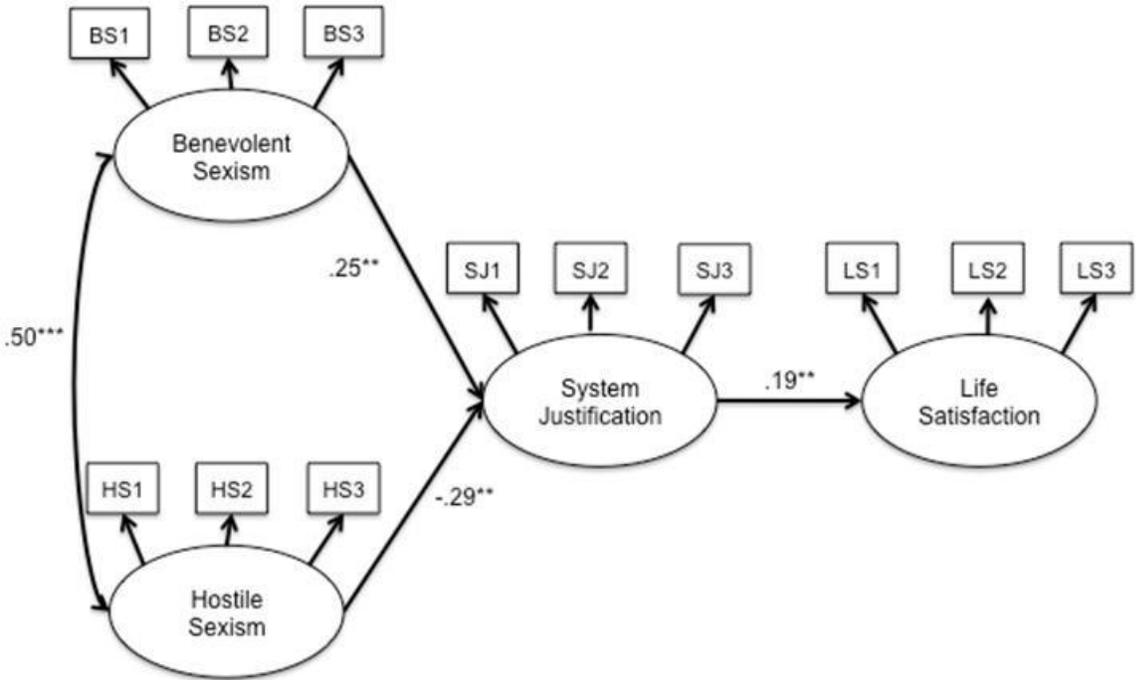


Figure 3-2. Structural model depicting the associations found among study variables for women. (Note: Model reflects the change in the path from hostile sexism to system justification that was found to be different for men and women. Standardized coefficients are presented for all directional paths. The covariance between benevolent sexism and hostile sexism is also presented. $*p < .05$, $**p < .01$, $***p < .001$).

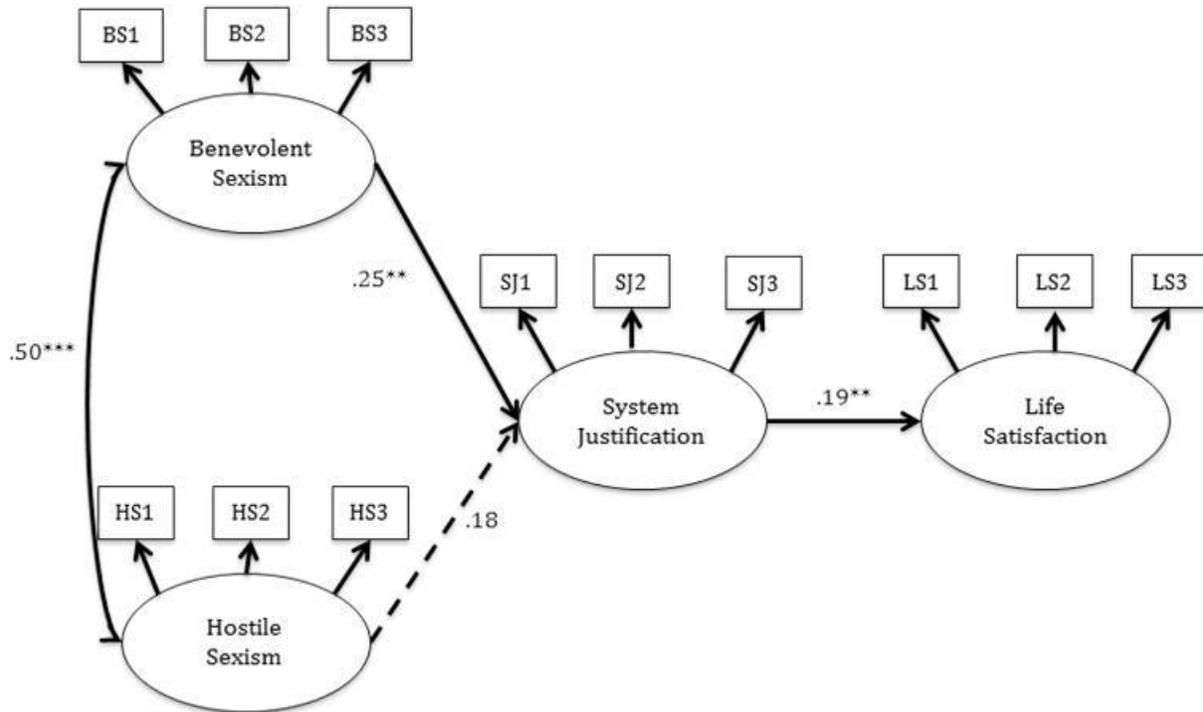


Figure 3-3. Structural model depicting the associations found among study variables for men. (Note: Model reflects the change in the path from hostile sexism to system justification that was found to be different for men and women. Standardized coefficients are presented for all directional paths. The covariance between benevolent sexism and hostile sexism is also presented. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$).

CHAPTER 4 DISCUSSION

System justification theory (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost & Hunyady, 2005) proposes that complementary beliefs about members of high-status and low-status groups promote the sense that society as a whole is fair and bolster life satisfaction for members of advantaged and disadvantaged groups. In an experiment, Jost and Kay (2005) found evidence suggesting that benevolent sexism, a traditional gender ideology that emphasizes the complementary roles of a warm female nurturer and a competent male protector (Glick & Fiske, 1996, 2001), promotes diffuse system justification, or the sense that the overall social structure is legitimate. However, most previous research has focused on benevolent sexism's ability to rationalize *specific* aspects of gender relations, such as the sexual division of labor within and outside of families, the persistence of sexism, and the fairness of gender roles (Becker & Wright, 2011; Glick & Whitehead, 2010; Hammond & Sibley, 2011). Although these previous findings are consistent with Tajfel's (1981) argument that stereotypical beliefs help rationalize and legitimize specific aspects of intergroup relations, they do not address system justification theory's broader prediction that complementary ideologies should legitimize society as a whole and indirectly promote life satisfaction for both women and men.

To my knowledge, no study to date has examined if *possessing* benevolently sexist beliefs is related to believing that the overall social structure is just. In addition, no study has explored system justification theory's prediction that benevolently sexist attitudes should be indirectly linked to life satisfaction for both men and women through increased diffuse system justification. Therefore, the present study builds on past work by testing the extent to which benevolently sexist beliefs are positively related to the

sense that society as a whole is fair and, in turn, are indirectly related to life satisfaction for both women and men.

Consistent with the hypotheses, structural equation modeling revealed that holding benevolently sexist beliefs were positively related to the belief that society is just for both women and men (Hypothesis 1a). In addition, these diffuse system-justifying beliefs were positively related to life satisfaction for both women and men (Hypothesis 1b). The results also revealed that benevolent sexism was indirectly linked to life satisfaction for both men and women through diffuse system-justifying beliefs (Hypothesis 1c). Also consistent with the hypotheses, I found that hostile sexism was too antagonistic to be associated with system justification (Hypothesis 2a): Hostile sexism was negatively related to system justification for women and unrelated to system justification for men. In turn, hostile sexism did not have an indirect effect on life satisfaction for women or men (Hypothesis 2b). Finally, I found a positive relation between benevolent and hostile sexism (Hypothesis 3).

Benevolent Sexism

The results provide evidence supporting system justification theory's prediction that complementary gender not only rationalize gender relations, as theorized by Tajfel (1981), but also legitimize the broader social structure. Thus, the correlational results offer tentative support for system justification theory's prediction that apart from making the gender system seem fair, benevolent sexism might also promote the sense that society as a whole is just. This emphasizes benevolent sexism's ability to serve a broader system-justifying function.

As Glick and Fiske (2001) argued, benevolently sexist beliefs may help legitimize the status quo by justifying gender roles and flattering women into cooperation with a

sexist system. Suggesting that women are warmer and more delicate than men not only justifies women's absence in high-status leadership roles but also might cajole women into not protesting against unfair treatment. In addition, system justification theory would suggest that benevolent sexism's complementary portrayal of gender roles is crucial in legitimizing the overall social structure. Like complementary beliefs about the rich and the poor (Kay & Jost, 2003), complementary beliefs about men and women contribute to the sense that society is structured fairly. By emphasizing women's communality and warmth, benevolent sexism might counteract the apparent social advantage men possess due to their alleged increased agency and competence (Jost & Kay, 2005). Thus, benevolent sexism's combination of gender role justification, flattery of women, and emphasis on the complementary nature of gender roles might render it particularly effective in justifying not only gender relations but also society as a whole.

The results also suggest that benevolent sexism might be a particularly dangerous ideology because not only it reinforces women's subordination but also perpetuates social inequality in general. On one hand, previous research suggests that benevolent sexism directly contributes to women's subordination by reinforcing traditional gender roles: Merely exposing women to benevolent sexism increases feelings of incompetence (Dumont et al., 2010), focus on physical appearance (Calogero & Jost, 2010), and submissive behavior (Moya et al., 2007), and benevolently sexist beliefs are related to attitudes excusing sexual harassment (Fiske & Glick, 1995; Pryor et al., 1995) and domestic violence (Glick et al., 2002; Sakalli, 2002). But on the other hand, by promoting the sense that society is fair, benevolently sexist beliefs may contribute to the maintenance of an unjust system involving a myriad of different types of social

inequality. Because it might help legitimize the existing social system, benevolent sexism could perpetuate the belief that social change is not necessary (Becker & Wright, 2011; Jost & Hunyady, 2005). Thus, although benevolent sexism subordinates women by reinforcing traditional gender roles, the present study suggests that it also may contribute to the continuation of an unjust society by potentially promoting the belief that the overall social structure is fair and does not need reform.

In addition, the results suggest that benevolent sexism is indirectly related to life satisfaction for both women and men, an indirect link that is mediated by the increased sense that society as a whole is just. This is consistent with system justification theory's prediction that complementary ideologies bolster life satisfaction for members of both advantaged and disadvantaged groups by promoting the sense that the overall social system is fair (Jost & Hunyady, 2005). For both men and women, benevolent sexism might promote happiness by increasing contentment with one's position within society (Jost & Hunyady, 2005). Although benevolent sexism may promote satisfaction by justifying gender roles and flattering women, its emphasis on the complementary nature of gender roles may also contribute to both women's and men's happiness with their station in life. By suggesting that both men and women have socially valued and unique characteristics, benevolent sexism might increase the sense that men's ubiquitous privilege and power is not only deserved due to their competence and agency but also fair since it is balanced by women's possession of the warm traits men lack. This might prevent men from experiencing negative feelings, such as guilt, because of their increased privilege. It also might help reduce women's frustration or dissatisfaction with their social station (Jost & Hunyady, 2005).

It is important to underscore that the process through which benevolent sexism is related to life satisfaction appears to be the same for both women and men: For both genders, benevolent sexism has an indirect effect on life satisfaction through increased diffuse, system-justifying beliefs. These findings challenge Hammond and Sibley's (2011) differential process model, which suggests that the mechanism through which benevolent sexism is associated with life satisfaction *differs* for men and women. The present study offers an alternate model to explain the process through which benevolent sexism relates to life satisfaction for women and men. The model tested in this study is not only grounded in system justification theory but is also more parsimonious than the differential process model, suggesting that the mechanism through which benevolently sexist beliefs is associated with life satisfaction is identical for men and women and that increased diffuse system justification completely explains benevolent sexism's positive relation to life satisfaction. Thus, the present study contributes to previous research by offering a simpler and more comprehensive model explaining the relation between benevolent sexism and life satisfaction for both men and women.

By suggesting that benevolent sexism is indirectly related to life satisfaction through the perception that society as a whole is fair, the correlations results of the present study offer a tentative possible explanation for the prevalence of benevolently sexist beliefs among both men and women. Members of both genders may be motivated to possess benevolently sexist beliefs because such attitudes may legitimize the status quo, which, in turn, might lead to increased life satisfaction. Taken as a whole, the results suggest that despite the harmful effects of benevolent sexism, men

and women might have a relatively strong motivation to maintain benevolently sexist attitudes. Thus, this study contributes to our understanding of why individuals might be motivated to hold prejudiced beliefs that perpetuate inequality. This might help researchers and clinicians in the field of counseling psychology better understand why individuals possess traditional gender attitudes that are oppressive in nature.

Hostile Sexism

In addition, the present study contributes to past research by suggesting that hostile sexist beliefs are indeed too antagonistic to contribute to the sense that society as a whole is fair: For men, hostile sexism was unrelated to system justification or life satisfaction, and for women, hostile sexism was negatively related to system justification. These findings are generally consistent with previous research suggesting that hostile sexism does not serve a broader system-justifying function in relatively gender-egalitarian societies (Becker & Wright, 2011; Calogero & Jost, 2011; Jost & Kay, 2005; Napier et al., 2010).

One potential reason hostile sexism was not positively associated with diffuse system justification is because gender equality remains part of an ongoing discourse in American culture (Napier et al., 2010). This discourse continues despite compelling and overwhelming evidence of rampant, ongoing sexism (e.g., Heilman, 2001). Therefore, it is possible that hostile sexism is *too* readily associated with societal injustice. In addition, hostile sexism may not be an effective system-justifying ideology because, unlike other victim-derogating ideologies that serve a system-justifying purpose, it does not offer a causal explanation for women's subordination. For instance, Kay et al. (2005) suggested that victim-derogating ideologies that promote system justification, such as belief in a just world, provide causal explanations for why members of the

disadvantaged group are disadvantaged. Although hostile sexism is certainly derogatory toward women, it does not provide an explanatory narrative to justify women's inferior status. For instance, instead of providing an explanatory narrative, hostile sexism simply criticizes women for (a) striving to steal power from men through female sexuality or feminism, (b) complaining about sexism, and (c) failing to appreciate men (Glick & Fiske, 1996, 2001). Because it does not offer a clear rationalization for women's lower status, hostile sexism is ineffective in justifying the current social structure, compared with other victim-derogating ideologies.

Importantly, the findings suggest that the relation between hostile sexism and diffuse system justification differs for men and women: Hostile sexism and system justification are unrelated for men and negatively related for women. This gender difference might reflect the fact that women are more likely than men to find hostile sexism insulting, consistent with evidence that women consistently score lower on hostile sexism than men (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Glick et al., 2000). It is possible that the blatantly insulting nature of hostile sexism incites women's anger, contributing to the sense that society is unfair and in need of reformation.

Limitations and Future Research

Although this study will hopefully clarify the relation between benevolent sexism, hostile sexism, and life satisfaction, it has several limitations. First, since the study is correlational in nature, these data cannot assess whether benevolent sexism *causes* increased system justification or increased life satisfaction through system justification. Future studies that employ experimental or cross-lagged panel designs might be better able to determine causal direction. For instance, a future study could investigate if exposing men and women to benevolently sexist statements increases diffuse system

justification, which, in turn, increases life satisfaction. In addition, a cross-lagged panel study will examine if possessing benevolent sexism is related to increased system justification and life satisfaction over time.

Second, the study's generalizability is limited by its sample. Because the sample is comprised mostly of White undergraduate students, the results of the present study may not generalize to other samples. Future research will, I hope, remedy this limitation by focusing on a broader, more representative population.

The present study contributes to existing literature by offering a more parsimonious model explaining the link between benevolent sexism and life satisfaction through diffuse system justification. It also suggests that men and women might be motivated to possess benevolently sexist beliefs because of their system-justifying function. Future research might build on these results by creating interventions to reduce the endorsement of benevolent sexism, perhaps by challenging the belief that society is in fact structured fairly and justly.

System justification theory predicts that benevolent sexism might promote life satisfaction for both men and women by legitimizing existing social structures. However, it also predicts that for members of disadvantaged groups, such as women, system-justifying ideologies result in decreased self-esteem, increased depression, and even increased neuroticism. For members of advantaged groups, such as men, system-justifying ideologies have opposite effects, resulting in increased self-esteem, decreased depression, and decreased neuroticism (Jost & Hunyady, 2005). Thus, even though the results suggest that benevolently sexist beliefs might be indirectly related to both women's and men's life satisfaction, future research is needed to investigate the

potentially harmful consequences of holding a system-justifying ideology such as benevolent sexism.

Given the different findings for men and women, future research might further investigate the association between hostile sexism and system justification as a function of participant gender. Although Glick and Whitehead (2010) found that hostile sexism might be positively related to gender-specific system justification, other studies have found a negative relation between hostile sexism and gender-specific system justification (Becker & Wright, 2011) or no relation between hostile sexism and system justification (Jost & Kay, 2005). In turn, although this study found that hostile sexism is not related to life satisfaction for men or women, Napier et al. (2010) and Hammond and Sibley (2011) found that hostile sexism was negatively related to life satisfaction for men. Thus, future research might further investigate the nature of the link between hostile sexism and life satisfaction.

Despite its limitations, the present study contributes to the existing body of research by providing evidence for system justification theory's prediction that benevolent sexism is associated with increased life satisfaction for both women and men and that this association is explained by an increase in diffuse system-justifying beliefs. Thus, the results offer an alternative and perhaps more comprehensive model explaining the relation between benevolent sexism and life satisfaction for both genders.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Kathleen Connelly was born and raised in Fairfax, Virginia. She received her B.A. from the University of Virginia in May of 2009. After working as a research assistant for Georgetown University's Fisher Center for Familial Cancer Research, she entered the doctoral program in the Department of Psychology at the University of Florida in August of 2010. She specializes in counseling psychology and received her M.S. in 2012. Currently, her research explores how living in a sexist environment impacts women's experiences and mental health.