Situational and Ideological Stake as Predictors of Women’s Perceptions of Ambivalent Sexism from Potential Romantic Partners

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University of Connecticut, 2006

According to the theory of ambivalent sexism, hostile sexism reflects an overt antipathy toward women, whereas benevolent sexism reflects the seemingly good-natured belief that women deserve to be cherished and protected by men. Both maintain unequal power dynamics between men and women. Previous research has shown that while women can label overt and hostile actions as sexist, they often do not recognize benevolent sexism as negative, especially when it comes from a close male partner (Killianski & Rudman, 1998; Ropp, 2004). The current research focuses on what leads (and inhibits) women to label benevolent forms of sexism from potential romantic partners. I argue that both ideological investment (i.e., endorsement of hostile and benevolent sexism and traditional gender roles) and situational determinants (i.e., feeling similar, receiving a compliment from a partner) play a role in women labeling benevolent sexism. In three experimental studies, I hypothesize that as an ideological or situational stake is heightened, the less likely she is to notice benevolent sexism. Study 1 found that women do indeed label a benevolently sexist partner as less negative compared to hostile sexist partner. Study 2 found that when women are primed to think about traditional gender roles, they are less likely to notice benevolent sexism and more likely to report positive evaluations of a male partner. However, when women were primed to think about egalitarian gender roles, they were significantly more likely to label benevolent comments as sexist and less likely to positively evaluate their partners. Both studies also
found that endorsement of hostile and benevolent sexism generally did not relate to evaluations of male targets. Study 3 manipulated aspects of situational stake; however, no differences were found between women who were described to be a good romantic match to their partners (or not) or complimented by their partners (or not). Implications of understanding women’s labeling of benevolent sexism is discussed in terms of normative heterosexual relationship patterns and contributing to structural levels of inequality.
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A Dissertation
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Connecticut 2006

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Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation

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# Table of Contents

Abstract........................................................................................................................................i
Title Page......................................................................................................................................iii
Copyright Page..........................................................................................................................iv
Approval Page............................................................................................................................v
Acknowledgements....................................................................................................................vi
Table of Contents.........................................................................................................................ix
List of Tables................................................................................................................................x
List of Figures.............................................................................................................................xi
Chapter 1: Overview of Research...............................................................................................1
Chapter 2: Contemporary Sexism ...............................................................................................3
Chapter 3: Gender Roles...............................................................................................................8
Chapter 4: Romantic Fantasies .....................................................................................................13
Chapter 5: Power in Relationships.............................................................................................18
Chapter 6: Noticing and Labeling Sexism..................................................................................23
Chapter 7: Perceiving Sexism From Close Others....................................................................29
Chapter 8: Study 1 .......................................................................................................................34
Chapter 9: Study 2 .......................................................................................................................55
Chapter 10: Study 3 ....................................................................................................................78
Chapter 11: General Discussion .................................................................................................90
References....................................................................................................................................104
Appendices...................................................................................................................................121
Tables..........................................................................................................................................126
7Figures.......................................................................................................................................131
Footnotes......................................................................................................................................134
List of Tables

1. Study 1: Correlations among Independent and Dependent Variables.................127
2. Study 2: Means and Standard Deviations of the Dependent Variables as a Function of Prime..................................................................................................................128
3. Study 2: Correlation among Independent and Dependent Variables...............129
4. Study 3: Correlations among Independent and Dependent Variables.............130
List of Figures

1. Study 2: Ratings of Comments as Sexist as a Function of Prime and Matched Status.................................................................131

2. Study 2: Ratings of Comments as Common as a Function of Prime and Matched Status...............................................................132

3. Study 2: Ratings of Partner as Potentially Abusive Toward a Girlfriend as a Function of Prime.........................................................133
Chapter 1: Overview of Research

What leads women to recognize discrimination and sexism? For nearly forty years, researchers have been asking and answering this question, while keeping stride with changes in social climate and political correctness (Dovidio, Rudman, & Glick, 2005). Recent research finds that while women notice overtly hostile forms of sexism in their everyday lives, they routinely do not label subtle and benevolent ideas and comments as sexist to the same degree (Killianski & Rudman, 1998; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, & Ferguson, 2001). These findings imply that it is normative for women to not notice benevolent sexism because it is associated with positive rewards such as attention, adoration, and protection. I argue that these rewards are even more meaningful to the degree that they are attached to a potential or actual relationship partner. I hypothesize that women are even less likely to notice benevolent ideas and actions as sexist when they are associated with a romanticized other or a potential romantic encounter.

In this thesis, I will focus my analysis on what leads (and inhibits) women to label benevolent forms of sexism. I put forth an argument that women often do not see benevolent ideologies as sexist when they hold some amount of personal stake in a situation or potential relationship. I operationalize personal stake in two ways. First, I believe stake is heightened when women hold an ideological worldview that validates the asymmetrical status quo, such as endorsing traditional gender roles. I posit that ideologies may also be endorsed more when they are made salient. Second, I believe that personal stake is heightened due to situational factors. For example, in one of the studies in this thesis, I test whether women feel more of a stake when they receive a compliment from a male partner. Taken together, I believe that the more invested a woman feels with a male, the less likely she is to notice sexism because of an ideological or situational
stake. In three experimental studies, I test hypotheses in which noticing and evaluating sexism in a romanticized other is a function of gender-role ideologies and heightened situational stake.

There are crucial consequences for women not recognizing how benevolent sexism can function in maintaining a system of gender hierarchy. Past research has shown that in not recognizing benevolent sexism interpersonally, women may be less aware of gender discrimination on more global levels and decrease their own expectations for leadership and power positions (Jost & Kay, 2005; Rudman & Heppen, 2003). The current research explores how interpersonal interactions, especially romanticized interpersonal relationships, play a large role in normalizing power dynamics between men and women.
Chapter 2: Contemporary Sexism

Like racism, the nature of sexism has changed form over the past few decades (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986; Swann, Langlois, & Gilbert, 1999; Swim, Aikin, Hall, & Hunter, 1995). The expression of overt misogyny and attitudes about women’s inferiority compared to men has declined over time (Spence, Helmrich, & Stapp, 1973). Norms of political correctness and increasing numbers of women in the workforce have changed the face of overtly negative attitudes toward women, making both men and women less likely to agree with old-fashioned ideas such as “women are generally not as smart as men” (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005; Spence et al., 1973; Swim et al., 1995; Swim, Mallett, Russo-Devosa, & Stangor, 2005). In its place, subtle and covert ideas about the differences between men and women have remained, and continue to influence the beliefs and behaviors of those in Western society (Benokraitis, & Feagin, 1995; Swim et al., 1995). However, modern forms of sexism are often not as easily recognized, because they are emitted through cultural ideologies and often operate on larger, systemic levels.

For example, although 63% of women in the U.S. are in the work-force in some fashion, public and corporate policies have not adapted fast enough to meet the needs of working mothers (Bernstein, 2004). Families still lack access to affordable day-care, leading to women juggling work and care-giving responsibilities. Underlying this and other issues, perhaps, is the long-standing belief that a woman’s primary role is in being a wife and mother (Coontz, 2005). Related phenomena, such as sexual harassment, backlash toward agentic women, and the wage gap also contribute to systemic inequalities in women’s status versus men’s (Albino Gilbert & Rader, 2001; Gutek & Done, 2001; Rudman & Glick, 2001; Swim, Aikin, Hall, & Hunter, 1995).
Research has suggested that women often do not recognize their subordinate status in society (Major, 1994). The decades after the second women’s movement of the late 1960s - 1970’s brought about considerably less energy and activism from young women. Compared to the fervor of the 1970’s, young women in the 1990’s were less likely to identify themselves as feminist, less likely to see women as an oppressed group, and relatively more complacent about advancing women’s status in the workforce (Baumgarder & Richards, 2000; Gurin & Townsend, 1986). Swim and colleagues (1995) note that because many struggles were thought to have been overcome by earlier feminists, younger women tend to think that there are little or no problems left to conquer. Further, because many inequalities exist on a larger structural level rather than as overt comments or jokes on an interactional level, it is harder for many to recognize that women are still disadvantaged (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1995). I will come back to address this issue in Chapter 5.

In social psychological research, several attempts have been made to capture the changing nature of sexism toward women, and people’s awareness of new and subtle forms of sexism. Two such attempts are the Modern Sexism scale and the Neosexism scale (Swim et al., 1995; Tougas, Brown, Beaton, & Joly, 1995). Most notably, modern sexism is a concept that assesses the degree to which individuals believe that continued discrimination against women is still present (e.g., “Women often miss out on good jobs due to sexual discrimination,” Swim et al., 1995). Modern sexism is closest to ideas about modern racism (McConahay, 1986), which posit that individuals generally show a denial in recognizing that discrimination is still a part of our social lives. Modern sexism also measures the degree to which people negatively view those who complain about sexism or try to reduce sexism (e.g., feminists or women’s groups). However, modern
sexism operationalizes women’s inequality primarily as functioning on an intergroup level, and tends to ignore the impact of women’s everyday interpersonal interactions with men.

Ambivalent Sexism

Arguably, what makes sexism function differently from other forms of oppression is the close, intimate connection between men and women in their day-to-day lives. While previous theories of sexism have adjusted to the capture the subtle way gender inequality now functions (Swim et al., 1995; Tougas et al., 1995), only one theory has explicitly deconstructed the fact that heterosexual romantic relationships play a large role in legitimizing the power differentials between men and women. Recently, Glick and Fiske (1996; 2001a; 2001b) have proposed a theory of Ambivalent Sexism, in which they argue that the close and interdependent roles in heterosexual relationships lay the foundation for inequality between men and women. They posit that sexism is comprised of two complementary parts: hostility and benevolence. Hostile sexism is most similar to the traditionally misogynistic ideas expressed in the older Attitudes Toward Women scale (Spence, Helmrich, & Stapp, 1973). Hostile sexism reflects an antipathy toward women and a mistrust of women’s advancing place in society, as expressed in the items “Women seek to gain power by getting control over men” and “When women lose to men in a fair competition, they typically complain about being discriminated against” (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Further, hostile sexism reflects that women use and abuse their sexual prowess to get what they want, as in the items, “Once a woman gets a man to commit to her, she usually tries to put him on a tight leash” and “There are actually very few women who get a kick out of teasing men by seeming sexually available and then refusing their
advances (reverse-coded).” Hostile sexism suggests that women act in a competitive way toward men to get ahead (Fiske, Xu, Cuddy, & Glick, 1999).

Whereas hostile sexism reflects competitive ideas about women and men, benevolent sexism suggests that women’s subordinate roles act in cooperation with men’s dominant roles (Glick & Fiske, 1996; 2001a). Benevolent sexism implies that it is a man’s role and duty to protect and cherish a woman, and a woman’s role is to provide encouragement, support, and nurturance. This belief advocates that although women and men may not be entirely equal in society, women have certain traits and roles that make them special and indispensable to men. Specifically, Glick and Fiske (1996) argue that benevolent sexism is comprised of three separate, yet related dimensions: heterosexual intimacy, complementary gender differentiation, and protective paternalism. First, heterosexual intimacy reflects the idea that women and men need each other to be complete, as in the item, “Every man ought to have a woman whom he adores.” Complementary gender differentiation reflects the idea that women and men both possess an opposite range of traits that complement each other. Women possess softness, purity, and nurturance, which complement men’s greater ability to protect and provide for others. These seemingly good-natured beliefs about gender differences are depicted in the items, “Women, compared to men, tend to have moral sensibility” and “Women, as compared to men, tend to have a more refined sense of culture and good taste.” Finally, protective paternalism validates the differences in men’s and women’s respective place in society, as in the items, “Men should be willing to sacrifice their own well-being in order to provide financially for the women in their lives” and “Women should be cherished and protected by men.” Belief in protective paternalism justifies women’s lower status than men’s, due to men’s and women’s complementary and necessary dependence on each
other. Taken together, benevolent sexism sounds pleasant and well-intentioned, and is often not contested.

Glick and Fiske (1996) describe that while benevolent sexism figuratively sets women on a pedestal, pedestals are confining. They argue that benevolent sexism is just as limiting for women as older, more overt forms of misogyny. On the surface, benevolent sexism assumes that women are inherently different than men (e.g., more pure and sensitive). However, the underlying message is that women are different and weaker than men. The ideologies of benevolent sexism justify women’s exclusion from roles and positions of power, while legitimizing men’s power. Glick et al. (2000) found that people in countries around the world believe in the ideas of benevolent, and to a lesser extent, hostile sexism. As most cultures in the world are patriarchal in structure, beliefs about the subordinate status of women are implicitly favored and normalized in cultural discourse (Crawford, 2001; Pratto, 1999).

However, what specifically makes benevolent sexism seem legitimate? In the subsequent chapters, I outline each of the components of benevolent sexism in more detail (complementary gender differentiation, heterosexual intimacy, and protective paternalism). Because each of these components are rooted in strong, culturally shared values, they collectively make it hard for women to notice the inherent inequality built into relationships between men and women, and therefore inhibit noticing that these ideas are sexist. In the next chapter, I review widespread beliefs about gender roles, corresponding to Glick and Fiske’s dimension of complementary gender differentiation, and describe that attitudes about men’s and women’s roles lay the foundation for understanding women’s justification of benevolent sexism.
Chapter 3: Gender Roles

Glick and Fiske (1996; 2001a) argue that one facet of benevolent sexism is the belief that men and women complement each other’s differences in a necessary and beneficial way for social relationships. The complementary differences between men and women are ambivalent because, as I will discuss later in this chapter, women are stereotyped as positive when they do not threaten men’s higher status and negative when they are perceived to threaten the status quo. Socially-upheld stereotypes of women’s and men’s roles are guised as natural and complementary, but function in creating patterns of subordination and dominance (Glick & Fiske, 2001b).

Popular discourse often reinforces the opposite “nature” of men and women. For example, the popular book, *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*, preaches a fundamental difference in the way men and women relate to each other and communicate (Gray, 1992). Essentialist theories such as these imply that gender differences are real, biological, and inevitable (Crawford, 2004). Gray also assumes a complementary pattern of gender differences. He argues that, “Men are motivated and empowered when they feel needed” and “women are motivated and empowered when they feel cherished” (Gray, 1992, p. 42-43). Thus, out of (supposedly) inherent biological differences comes expectations for differential patterns in social behaviors and roles. We can assume this proscribes that women should appeal to men’s needs by being dependent, and men appeal to women’s needs by being adorning and protecting.

Although this is an example from popularized psychology, research finds that general attitudes about men and women mirror these dichotomies. Individuals generally associate traits and characteristics of men and women along polarized dimensions. Women are typically stereotyped as being emotional, relational, nurturing, and sensitive,
while men are stereotyped as aggressive, rational, and achievement oriented (Broverman, Broverman, Clarkson, Rosenkrantz, & Vogel, 1970; Deaux & Lewis, 1984). Eagly and Mladnic (1989; 1994) further explain that individuals tend to see women as “communally-oriented” and men as “agentic.” Eagly and Wood (1999) argue that these traits have evolutionarily become associated with men and women because of the social roles that they have performed throughout human existence. As far back as hunter-gatherer societies, women’s primary responsibilities have been in child-rearing, feeding the family, and nurturing the sick. Men’s tasks were more active, including hunting for food, fighting off predators, and protecting the family. As humans have evolved however, the division of household labor has continued to fall along gendered lines. Women typically still perform the majority of the housework and food preparation, while a larger percentage of men are the family’s primary breadwinner (Albino Gilbert & Rader, 2001). According to social role theory, women have always been in roles where the emphasis was on relating to and caring for others, whereas men perform more individualistic and active tasks (Eagly & Wood, 1999; Wood & Eagly, 2002). Jost and Banaji (1994) assert that “whether by historical accident or human intention, the resulting arrangements tend to be explained and justified simply because they exist (p. 11).” Thus, gender roles have been socially constructed to match social reality (Wilkinson, 2001).

Although women’s roles have been rather malleable over time, with women entering the work-force and higher education (Diekman & Eagly, 2000), men’s roles have remained rigid (Kahn, 1984). An increasing amount of research on men and masculinity has argued that gender stereotypes limit men as well as women (Kimmel & Messner, 2001; Levant & Pollack, 1995; O’Neil, Good, & Holmes, 1995). Men’s gender role expectations assert that they need to be strong, powerful, and protective over women.
Further, men who transgress gender role stereotypes are faced with harshly negative
argues that a powerful motive for men to behave according to their gender role
expectations lies in a “fear of femininity.” Because femininity is devalued and associated
with weakness and subordination, a man who possesses any feminized traits or qualities
is judged as not a “real” man. Bardwick and Douvan (1971) note that “male criteria are
the norms against which female performance, qualities, or goals are measured” (p. 233).
As men learn to internalize the fear of femininity, they subsequently learn other limiting
patterns of behavior, such as being emotionally restrictive and obsessed with achievement

So far, I examined stereotypes about women (and men) in general; however, not
all women may fall into this image. To understand the nature of stereotypes about both
women as a general group and stereotypes of sub-types of women, let us turn to the
theory of ambivalent stereotypes. Recently, Glick and Fiske (2001b) put forth a theory of
ambivalent stereotypes, in which they argue that groups in society (including women) can
be both negatively stereotyped in some domains and positively evaluated in others. The
theory posits that groups are stereotyped along complementary dimensions of warmth
and competence. They argue that “warm” relates to traits such as emotionality,
sensitivity, and religiousity; these are traits that do not threaten the status quo and act in
cooperation with dominant groups. Further, “competence” includes traits such as hard-
working, motivated, and dominant; groups stereotyped as high in this dimension are seen
as status-seeking and threatening to the status quo. For example, “women” as a general
category are stereotyped as being highly sensitive and emotional, but not very intelligent.
This would place them high in warmth and low in competence. However, there exist
sub-categories of “women,” such as a business woman or feminist. These women would be seen as low in warmth (e.g., not nurturing) and high in competence (e.g., pushy, aggressive, bitchy). Business women and feminists are seen as a threat to men’s power, and not surprisingly, are often evaluated more negatively than women who conform to traditional gender roles (Rudman & Fairchild, 2004; Rudman & Glick, 2001). Further, men who hold strong beliefs about power and hierarchy evaluate women who threaten the status quo most negatively (Haddock & Zanna, 1994). Glick and Fiske (2001a) argue that together, the positive appraisal of non-threatening women (e.g., housewives) and punishments against status-threatening women (e.g., career women and feminists), reinforce adherence to gender roles and, ultimately, systemic inequality between men and women.

It is important to note that these stereotypes are present and active in various types of social interactions. For example, holding the belief that women are sensitive and better at managing relationships than information can have effects in both personal relationships and in the workplace. In the home, this belief might result in the decision that the woman should stay at home to raise the children, whereas in the workplace, it might result in women being relegated to jobs with better people skills (e.g., secretary) than jobs with high stress and control (e.g., CEO). Thus, the same stereotypes can affect women’s outcomes on multiple social levels (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1986).

In this chapter, I reviewed evidence that men and women hold complementary gender roles, which reinforce women’s docility and passivity and men’s aggressiveness and fear of femininity. Complementary gender roles for men and women work together in structuring an interdependent pattern of gender relations, such that men provide protection and security and women provide nurturance and care-giving. Because these
characteristics are not viewed as inherently bad, they are often accepted as natural and even desired as traits in a romantic other. In the next chapter, I build on this idea and argue that cultural scripts for relationships, especially for women, largely include idealistic romantic fantasies, in which men are favored to be strong, heroic, and protective.
Chapter 4: Romantic Fantasies

A second part of Glick and Fiske’s conceptualization of benevolent sexism is heterosexual intimacy. Building on the complementary gender roles piece, heterosexual intimacy argues that not only do men and women balance each other’s roles and traits, but heterosexual relationships are a necessary part of achieving maturity and completeness. These values are also reflected in our governing social institutions, as heterosexual couples are rewarded (e.g., marriage laws, tax cuts) while non-heterosexual couples and unmarried heterosexual individuals are stigmatized and marginalized.

The idea that men and women need each other in order to achieve happiness and completeness is widely culturally shared. It is also generally agreed upon that women are the keepers of relationships. Lloyd (1991) describes that although men typically initiate many of the courtship rituals, women are “ultimately responsible for relationship maintenance” (p. 15). A wealth of self-help books reaffirm this message (Schilling & Fuehrer, 1993). Further, in everyday life, women are bombarded with messages instructing them how to seduce men into their own storybook fantasy (Hollows, 2000). Various forms of media provide readily available and well-defined scripts of what an ideal male-female romantic relationship should look like.

For example, romance novels, which are read by twenty-five million American women annually, clearly idealize a romantic script in which a woman (e.g., damsel in distress) is passive and waiting for a man (e.g., Prince Charming) to protect and rescue her (Sherven & Sniechowski, 1995). This is a common scenario that is found in other genres of fiction, film, television, and increasingly, websites (Hollows, 2000). The
popular television show, The Bachelor, promises to highlight “all the romance and fantasy of new relationships” for its audience (Fleiss & Levenson, 2006). The show features twenty five women who vie for the attention and love of one eligible bachelor, culminating in a proposal to one lucky woman. In the United States, among other countries, young women are socialized to fantasize about and plan lavish Cinderella-type weddings, reinforced by media depiction of the ritual as “necessary for guaranteeing the happy ending” (Otnes & Pleck, 2003; Ingraham, 1999; Ingraham, 2003, p. 1070).

Girls are socialized at a young age to learn and value this romanticized script of relationships. For example, feminist critiques of Disney movies show that by and large, females are portrayed as helpless, passive, and dependent on men, reinforcing the traditional gender roles discussed in Chapter 3 (Towbin, Haddock, Schindler Zimmerman, Lund, & Tanner, 2003; Wiersma, 2001). In a content analysis of Disney films, Towbin et al. (2003) discussed several themes found in 26 feature-length movies. One of the most prominent themes in the films found that women were helpless and in need of protection (e.g., The Seven Dwarfs, Sleeping Beauty, The Little Mermaid). To complement this, men were often portrayed as “naturally strong and heroic” in 19 of the movies (e.g., Cinderella, Beauty and the Beast). Male characters were almost always shown rescuing others and “saving the day” (Towbin et al., 2003, p. 29). Women, however, were valued much more for their appearance than their skills or intellect. For example, in The Little Mermaid, Ariel chooses to trade her voice in order to have legs, leaving only her body to seduce and win over Prince Eric. In Beauty and the Beast, Belle is ostracized by the townsfolk because of her love of reading. It comes as no surprise then that an additional theme found in 15 of the movies showed women in domestic roles, mostly performing in-home domestic labor (Towbin et al., 2003; Wiersma, 2001).
four female characters were shown performing roles outside of the home, including an actress, sheep tender, thief, and fairy (Wiersma, 2001).

A more disturbing message is illustrated in *Beauty and the Beast*. At various points in the movie, the Beast screams at Belle, threatens to withhold food from her, and throws her father out of the castle. In response, Belle playfully sings and convinces herself that there is a loving person underneath the harsh exterior and that she needs to keep trying to coax that loving person out (Sun, 2001). Beres (1999) describes that implicit in this narrative, men’s control, power, and abuse over women are romanticized and eroticized. Clearly, the way to deal with an abusive partner is to commit to changing him and persevere with love. Further, this interpretation sends the dangerous message that women are responsible for the success of relationships, even abusive ones, with the right amount of love and hard work.

Some research suggests that patterns of gender-role conformity found in the media do indeed trickle down to affect ideas about real life relationships. Rose and Frieze (1989) suggest that young adult men and women share highly structured ideas of the behaviors that constitute a hypothetical first date. They find that “behavior is highly scripted early in dating, particularly along gender lines” (Rose & Frieze, 1989, p. 500). College students agree that men perform “proactive” roles, such as asking for the date, planning the events, driving, paying, and initiating physical or sexual contact. In contrast, women perform more passive, “reactive” roles, including grooming, waiting to be picked up, and keeping the conversation going (Grauerholz & Serpe, 1985; Rose & Frieze, 1989). Further, Rose and Frieze (1993) find that students’ actual dating experiences mirror these hypothetical scripted behaviors. Men’s and women’s courtship behavior is so normalized in cultural dating scripts, that when women deviate from these
expectancies or take on a more active role, they tend to be viewed negatively (Green & Sandos, 1983). Collectively, gender-role appropriate behavior for women (e.g., waiting for the man and looking pretty) and for men (e.g., making decisions) play a large role in signaling interest in romantic relationships. These heteronormative scripts are learned and reinforced across many social situations (Deaux & Major, 1987).

Given that these traditional idealistic scripts of future romantic relationships are so culturally present, what impact do they have for real-life choices and outcomes for women? In one particularly relevant study, Rudman and Heppen (2003) show that buying into romantic fantasies can have detrimental consequences to women’s interest and expectations in furthering their careers. In three experimental studies, they examined implicit romantic fantasies about relationship partners and their association to educational goals, projected income, and status of their future job interest. Implicit romantic fantasies were assessed by using a modified Implicit Associations Task design (Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998), in which women’s and men’s response time associations were assessed between ideas about their relationship partners and romance-laden terms (e.g., Prince Charming, white knight) or neutral terms (e.g., Average Joe). They found that as women held stronger belief in implicit romantic fantasies, they subsequently reported less projected income, lower educational goals, and favored jobs that held lower power and status (Rudman & Heppen, 2003). This study is critical to the goals of this paper because it illustrates that one of the consequences of endorsing romantic fantasies is that they can bolster the larger, systemic patterns of inequality between men and women in society. Further, because many women favor these fantasies, they are legitimized and justified, making it much more difficult to see how these roles lead to structural inequalities.
In this chapter, I reviewed the idea that complementary gender roles of man-as-provider and woman-as-nurturer are not only endorsed in Western society, but favored as the ideal. In popular media, an idealized relationship script involves a dominant man sweeping a waiting woman off her feet and on to eternal happiness. This script renders women passive participants in their own lives, and limits the give-and-take of a real relationship. However, because this ideal is normalized and rewarded, women often desire these kinds of interactions and do not see anything limiting about them. In the next chapter, I describe that because traditional gender roles such as these are culturally reinforced and seen as positive and complementary, the inherent power dynamics are not readily recognized. Specifically, because power is generally associated with overt control and force, women do not often recognize that ideologies such as benevolent sexism could also function in maintaining patterns of dominance and subordination. In the next chapter, I explicitly describe the relationship between benevolence and power.
Chapter 5: Power in Relationships

In the previous chapters, I argued that ideas about men’s and women’s characteristics and roles are asymmetrical in content, leading men to be stereotyped as aggressive and protective and women to be stereotyped as passive and dependent. In the current chapter, I describe how these roles are used as the foundation in maintaining unequal status differentials, specifically in heterosexual relationships.

Most social interactions and relationships in society inherently have power dynamics. As researchers have theorized about the nature of power in relationships, it is clear that not all types of power look the same. According to French and Raven’s (1959) dimensions, power can take form in myriad ways, from overt force (coercive power) to adopting the attitudes of a charismatic or well-respected other (referent power). Further, individuals can garner power by holding the legitimate authority to govern rules and punishments (legitimate power), grant rewards or monetary gains (reward power), or influence others by their knowledge, skill, or expertise (information and expert power) (French & Raven, 1959). It is important to remember that because these forms of power do not all include overt force and are ingrained into our everyday norms and roles, it is often hard to recognize when they are functioning.

Paternalism

Ordinarily, when thinking of power, one may conjure up thoughts of violence, force, and threats. In a groundbreaking analysis of ideology and social control, Jackman (1994) argued that while hostility and violence do play a role in sustaining power, they are not the primary tools in maintaining relationships of unequal power. Rather, benevolence is a key ingredient in the long-term maintenance of relationships between “dominants” (e.g., men, Whites) and “subordinates” (e.g., women, African Americans).
Benevolence is defined as “an act intending or showing kindness and good will” (Agnes, 1999). Benevolent acts and intentions often involve the dominant showing care, protection, or moralistic judgments on behalf of the subordinate. For example, consider a man offering to carry a heavy package for a woman to spare her the burden. This, and many other daily occurrences (e.g., men holding doors open for women), are also known as chivalrous. While on the surface these acts seem well-meaning and mannered, scholars like Jackman argue that they form the basis for relationships riddled with unequal power and status. They are what VanDe Veer (1986) terms “paternalistic” relationships. Patterns of paternalistic relationships assume that the dominant party holds a “presumptive claim to a superior understanding of the subject’s [subordinate’s] best interests than the subject may possess him- or herself” (Jackman, 1994, p. 12).

Paternalistic relationships follow the norms of ordinary relationships, such as caring for each other and being attentive to each other’s needs (Pratto & Walker, 2001). Paternalistic relationships mimic other types of relationships with status-differentials, such as a parent-child or teacher-student. However, in the case of the parent-child (or parental) relationship, the parent holds legitimate authority to control outcomes and decision-making and distribute rewards and punishments because the subordinates themselves do not hold the cognitive capacity to make their own decisions (French & Raven, 1959). In paternalistic relationships, no such inherent dependence on the dominant is needed to survive; however, through benevolence and symbolic acts of love and loyalty, the subordinate comes to live a cycle of dependence on the dominant partner.

When these patterns of behavior are systematically shared by others, they are woven into the fabric of normalized social interactions, and are then legitimized and sustained over long periods of time. However, there are systematic processes that make
paternalistic relationships function unnoticeably. Pratto and Walker (2001) argue that paternalistic relationships are maintained because they are mutually consensual. That is, both parties agree on the legitimacy of each other’s position and role, which in turn produces a cohesive unit. For example, in a marriage, both parties might agree that the male should be the primary breadwinner while the female stays home to care for the children. Thus women collectively participate in the decisions that lead to their subordinate status. This point is crucial in understanding how benevolent sexism is legitimized (see Chapter 6 for an extended discussion).

*Paternalism as a Weapon of Abuse*

Considering paternalism is an instrument in maintaining unequal power in relationships, it is natural that we find it operating in one of the most severe types of power relationships – relationships with physical or emotional abuse. Abusive relationships may look very similar to non-abusive ones, especially in the early stages, because of the use of benevolence by the abusive partner. According to Wilson (1997), abusive relationships start as a highly romantic, whirlwind experience, bolstered by claims of “love at first sight” and “you’re the only one I need” (p. 26). One formerly abused woman describes, “When I first met Maury, he was the man I had dreamed of. It seemed too good to be true. He was charming, funny, and smart, and best of all, he was crazy about me” (Bancroft, 2003, p. 4).

However, this stage ultimately deteriorates and eventually becomes filled with increasing tension. As the tension increases, it leads into an acute episode, which may consist of verbal, physical, or sexual violence. The abusive partner finally cycles back to an apologetic honeymoon stage (Walker, 1979). Because of a woman’s love and emotional connection to her partner, she is able to excuse violence “that would be
unacceptable between strangers” (Jackman, 1994, p. 84). Benevolence, in a relationship of unequal power, allows the subordinate to discount occasions of episodic violence because she truly believes that the behavior is not representative of his ordinary self, and because he professes sincere apologies. Bancroft (2003) argues that “being kind and loving usually just becomes a different approach to control and manipulation and gradually blends back into more overt abuse (p. 151). Jackman (1994) argues that in abusive relationships, benevolence, intimacy, and love play a proximal role in maintaining power and control in relationships, while hostility and violence play a more distal role. In conjunction with Jackman’s theory, an abuser does not need to use overt violence to maintain control over an intimate partner. Rather, the limited and intermittent use of violence (or the threat of violence), coupled with the façade of benevolent and caring actions, is enough to facilitate the bonds of loyalty and commitment (Jackman, 1994; 2001).

It is important to note that benevolence is also a ritualized part of normative dating scripts. If abusive and non-abusive relationships both contain benevolence, it may take longer for abused women to recognize underlying patterns of control and dominance.

In this chapter, I argued that individuals generally associate power with overt control and force. However, more recent analyses of power assert that subtle and good-natured exchanges play an important, if not greater, part in maintaining systems of inequality. Not noticing power in paternalistic relationships is important in understanding how women do not notice subtle acts of power and oppression that contribute to the larger system of gender inequality. Specifically, when interactions seem benevolent, the subordinate is disoriented into believing the dominant is acting in their
best interest, which in turn sustains the status quo. In the next chapter, I describe several reasons why women might not notice benevolent sexism, such as legitimizing the ideologies that go along with accepting systems of inequality, especially for the disadvantaged party. I argue that, in part, women do not notice benevolent sexism because they endorse culturally shared ideologies that justify traditional gender roles, romantic fantasies, and paternalistic relationships.
Chapter 6: Noticing and Labeling Sexism

While women generally recognize hostile or overt instances of gender discrimination, they do not tend to see benevolence as sexism or limiting in power (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, & Ferguson, 2001). This chapter will focus on several reasons why this might be the case, leading up to the rationale for the current studies. In chapters 2, 3, and 4, I argued that because gender roles and scripts are subtly embedded in cultural ideology and normative behaviors, they prescribe patterns of unequal status, and are harder to critique or label as sexist (Swim, Mallett, & Stangor, 2004). Below, I review several additional reasons – legitimizing ideologies, minimization of personal discrimination, and mental representations of sexism – that may account for women’s diminished awareness of benevolence as sexism. Finally, I arrive at a new theoretical viewpoint, involving personal stake, which may aid in explaining women’s labeling of benevolent sexism, and serves as the basis for the following studies.

Legitimizing Ideologies

As I discussed in the previous chapters, widely shared ideas treat men and women as opposite in nature and interdependent. On the surface, these ideas are subjectively benevolent, which makes them less likely to be critiqued or challenged. Researchers have long noted that when ideas are culturally shared and supported, they are not contested (Allport, 1954; Gardner, 1994). Because benevolent sexism is valued and favored in many cultures, it is not surprising that women do not see benevolence as a form of sexism.

Several theoretical frameworks argue that cultural ideologies are at the crux of legitimizing ideas of benevolent sexism. Specifically, through ideologies of legitimacy and meritocracy, both dominant and subordinate groups justify group inequality (Jost &
First, social dominance theory asserts that stereotypes exist as culturally shared “legitimizing myths” (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Because higher status groups, such as men, typically favor group-based hierarchy, they use legitimizing myths to justify women’s lower social status. For example, because women are “naturally” better care-givers, they are thought of as better served to stay at home with kids rather than pursue full-time work. Further, ideologies of deservingness and the Protestant work ethic place personal responsibility on individuals to move themselves out of their disadvantaged status by promoting values such as hard work and persistence (Sidanius, Levin, Federico, & Pratto, 2001; Weber, 1904/1958). System justification theory expands on this, and argues that members of subordinate groups themselves also buy into these myths which serve to disadvantage them (Jost & Banaji, 1994). For example, Major (1994) describes a series of studies in which women and men were asked to judge how many hours they would work and how much they should deserve to get paid according to an identical job description. Women, on average, significantly differed from men in that they reported more work hours and less pay for the same job description as men. System justification researchers argue that subordinates have internalized legitimizing myths because they provide a way to see the world and social systems as fair and just and explain their disadvantaged status (Lerner, 1980).

**Personal/Group Discrimination Discrepancy**

Another vein of research suggests that women may well recognize that discrimination is a real phenomenon, but that it does not personally affect them. Crosby (1984) was one of the early theorists who argued that people who belong to socially disadvantaged groups often recognize that they are part of a group that is discriminated against, but deny personal experiences of discrimination. For example, Taylor, Wright,
Moghaddam, & Lalonde (1990) found that South Asian and Haitian immigrant women in Canada reported significantly more awareness of discrimination against people of their group than discrimination personally experienced. This phenomenon, known as “denial” or “minimization” of discrimination, has been theorized to protect people from feeling personally responsible and preserve their personal self-esteem and sense of control (Crocker & Major, 1989; Crosby, 1984; Ruggiero & Taylor, 1997; Taylor, Wright, & Porter, 1994). Some research suggests that women who do recognize personal discrimination face increased levels of depression and diminished well-being; therefore, minimizing its existence is self-protective (Crocker & Major, 1989; Kobrynowicz & Branscombe, 1997; Schmitt, Branscombe, Kobrynowicz, & Owen, 2002).

Some theorists also argue that although individuals may recognize that they are a part of a stigmatized group, they do not feel membership in that group is an important or central concept of their self, which in turn affects whether they recognize personal instances of sexism (Gurin & Townsend, 1986; Pinel, 1999; Operario & Fiske, 2001). Cameron (2001) notes that as gender is increasingly a larger part of women’s consciousness, they are more likely to be group identified and hold greater perceptions of discrimination. Women, as well as other subordinate groups, might not recognize personal instances of sexism to the degree that they are not highly invested as a member of their group.

Mental Representations of Sexism and Sexists

Finally, research also argues that perceptions of sexism are largely biased by cognitive models of what sexism (or a sexist) should look like. Researchers suggest that a mental representation comes to mind when women think about what sexism is or who is a sexist. Swim and colleagues (2001) had participants keep daily diary records of
everyday incidents of sexism. They found that women labeled sexism according to three categories: traditional gender role stereotyping, demeaning or derogatory comments, and sexual objectification. Women identified comments such as “you’re a woman, so fold my laundry” as clearly sexist. However, ideas such as this are overt and quite hostile, and leads us to question whether or not participants picked up on comments with the same underlying theme (gender differentiation) that were said in a less derogatory tone.

People also have relatively strict ideas about who is sexist. A robust trend shows that men, and not women, are thought to be prototypical perpetrators of sexism (Baron, Burgess, & Kao, 1991; Barreto & Ellemers, 2005; Burgess, 1998). Research shows that sexism (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005) and sexual harassment (Golden, Johnson, & Lopez, 2001; LaRocca & Kromrey, 1999) are evaluated more negatively coming from a male perpetrator than a female. Further, sexism from attractive males is considered less harmful than unattractive males (LaRocca & Kromrey, 1999). Crosby (1982) suggests that women identify a “villain” or prototypical idea of someone who is sexist in their minds. Usually, friends, family members, and close partners do not come to mind as villainous perpetrators (Ropp, 2004).

It is well determined that hostile ideas fit the cognitive mold of sexism, and are therefore noticed and labeled as such. However, research continues to examine whether or not benevolent ideas are also seen sexist, and what may account for the discrepancy (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005; Killianski & Rudman, 1998; Milillo, 2004; Swim et al., 2005). Barreto and Ellemers (2005) contend that because benevolent sexism appears likable and the source of benevolent sexism himself may be liked, it is not seen as prototypically sexist. They find that positive evaluations of the source of benevolent sexism predict women’s decreased likelihood to identify benevolent comments as sexist.
Killianski and Rudman (1998) put forth an alternative argument, and assert that women can allow for the coexistence of both disagreeing with hostile sexism and endorsing benevolent sexism. Women often oppose hostile sexism because it overtly undermines women’s advancement in work and status. However, they argue that benevolent sexism is condoned because it protects women from the more threatening or dangerous tasks that are relegated to men. As women are seen as softer and more fragile, it legitimizes their absence from roles such as serving in combat or in dangerous police forces. Killianski and Rudman posit that many women feel this system benefits them, and call these individuals “equivocal egalitarians” (2001, p. 335). This theory holds some support for a system justification point of view, in that although women see themselves as holding less powerful positions, they corroborate in justifying these ideologies. However, according to Killianski and Rudman’s view, women may in fact see themselves as holding a more prized status in society, such that while men are more disposable (in terms of combat), women are more worthy of protecting.

So far, I have outlined three general reasons why women might not notice and label sexism, specifically benevolent sexism, including legitimizing ideologies, minimization of personal discrimination, and mental representations of sexism. The discussion thus far has focused on why women do not label sexism in general – either in the form of sexist ideas or coming from ambiguous or fictitious targets. I posit that sexism is not only perpetrated by “villainous” or strange men, but also gets communicated through those women frequently interact with – such as friends, family, and romantic partners. Jackman (1994) illustrates how even those closest to women can espouse ideas and values that serve to sustain and legitimize hierarchy. Jackman also
persuasively argues that it is under these conditions that those disadvantaged rarely recognize these ideologies as contributing to inequality.

In the following chapter, I bring these ideas together and argue that women do not recognize benevolent sexism not only because of its good-natured characteristics, but also as it functions in maintaining romantic heterosexual relationships. I argue that women are less likely to recognize benevolent sexism specifically when it comes from someone with whom there is a potential or actual romantic relationship. I posit that because women are motivated to maintain harmonious relationships and are ideologically invested in the benefits of benevolent sexism from romantic partners, they are less likely to notice that benevolent ideas and comments are a form of sexism. Ultimately, I argue that as women hold a stake in a potential relationship, they are invested in not noticing sexism.
Chapter 7: Perceiving Sexism from Close Others

I argue that benevolent sexism is not noticed when it comes from those with whom women have a romantic (or potentially romantic) connection. Although little research has explored this connection, below I review several studies that point to the phenomenon and how it may exist. Then, I illustrate an additional perspective – personal stake – through which we can understand how women are inhibited from noticing benevolent sexism in their everyday lives.

Perceiving Sexism from Close Others

If women do not think of benevolent comments or actions from ambiguous or non-close others as sexist, they ought to have an increasingly hard time evaluating benevolent sexism when it comes from a close other. In her dissertation, Ropp (2004) measured women’s recognition of group-based sexism when the source was a close or non-close other. She found that women were less likely to recognize sexism from people who were interpersonally close, such as a romantic partner, which in turn reduced their proclivity for assertive action (Study 2). Further, in an experimental manipulation (Study 1), participants performed an activity with a male partner (the Interpersonal Closeness Procedure (ICP); Aron, Mellinat, Aron, Vallone, & Bator, 1997), which is designed to create significant feelings of closeness with a stranger in a short amount of time by revealing personal information about themselves. Ropp manipulated whether women performed the ICP with male partners or performed a similar task that did not elicit closeness. Then the participant observed either a benevolently sexist comment or no comment ostensibly coming from the male partner. She found that after women became close with their partner, they were less likely to evaluate his comment as sexist than the women who had not become close with their partners. Further, participants in the
closeness condition were overall more likely to think their partner was caring and expressed a greater desire for future interactions with him. In short, Ropp (2004) shows that as interpersonal closeness gets stronger, women are less likely to notice and respond to benevolent sexism.

Additional research builds on this idea. In a set of studies by Milillo (2004), heterosexual, lesbian and bisexual women evaluated hostile and benevolent sexism. Milillo found that heterosexual women were more likely to endorse benevolent sexism compared to both lesbian and bisexual women. Further, when asked who, if any, people came to mind when they thought about benevolent ideologies, heterosexual women reported thinking about their own romantic partners (past, present, or future) to evaluate the ideas of ambivalent sexism, while lesbian and bisexual women were more likely to be thinking about women as a group. One way to evaluate these results is that because heterosexual women interact with men in the context of romantic relationships to a greater degree than lesbian and bisexual women, they hold a greater stake in benefiting from the ideas of benevolent sexism, and are thus less likely to identify anything negative about them. In contrast, because lesbian (and to a lesser extent, bisexual women) have little to gain from benevolent sexism with men, there are more able to see the way in which benevolent ideologies serve to disadvantage women on the intergroup level. This would suggest that as one has more ideological stake in benefiting from benevolent sexism, the less she would recognize it as disadvantaging.

Personal Stake in Relationships

I believe that as (heterosexual) women have an increasing amount of stake in an interaction or relationship with a man, they are less likely to notice benevolent sexism. Consider a woman and man getting to know each other on a first date. Suppose they both
are attracted to each other. Then, the man makes a subtle, yet good-natured comment about women, such as “a woman should be treated like a princess.” She may interpret this comment as attraction or flattery, or take it as a sign of what he would be like as a relationship partner. Because she likes him, she may be very invested in the potential of this relationship and not engage in any further thought of the implications of such a comment for her gender group. This tendency might be exacerbated further if the woman strongly endorses traditional gender roles and the ideas of benevolent sexism.

Or, perhaps she recognizes that it is a traditional and out-dated statement, but implicitly decides to overlook to not spoil the social interaction. If she probes him further about the legitimacy of his comment, it could create discomfort, heated conversation, and diminish positive illusions about her partner (Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996). Further, her inquisition about his stereotypical comment could generate negative evaluations of her. It can cost women to identify discrimination. Research has found that women who speak out against sexism and discrimination are negatively judged and labeled as complainers (Kaiser and Miller, 2003; 2004).

Taken together, I propose that women minimize the existence of benevolent sexism when romantic attention is involved. Because of the personal stake involved, women may feel they would benefit from their partner’s benevolent ideas or feel they may forfeit flirtation or romantic attention by labeling benevolent ideas as sexist. Below, I operationalize what I mean by stake, and the difference between ideological and situational stake.

**Ideological versus Situational Stake**

In this paper, I make a distinction between situational stake and ideological stake as factors why women might not recognize benevolent sexism. Taken together, I offer
the general term *stake* to reflect a woman’s psychological connection with another person, with whom there is a desired involvement or investment. A woman who feels a stake with another may also feel that not participating in the interaction or relationship with the other person will deprive her of something positive or beneficial. Thus, one may feel a personal stake in relation to someone with whom there is a personal gain or loss.

I differentiate ideological stake from situational stake. Starting with the latter, I use *situational stake* to mean a greater degree of personal stake through heightened conditions of the situation or context. For example, Ropp (2004) manipulated whether participants interacted in a task that elicited closeness or did not elicit closeness. Those in the closeness condition would be higher in situational stake, according to this definition. Further, literature from the sexual harassment literature finds that often situational determinants have a large effect in whether women interpret sexual harassment, such as the attractiveness of the perpetrator (LaRocca & Kromrey, 1999) or whether there is physical contact (Gutek, 1985). In this paper, studies 2 and 3 use a manipulation of situational closeness involving the participant believing her partner shares psychological and personality characteristics with her and compliments her. These are situations in which the situational context provides a greater degree of involvement, interaction, or desire for interaction for the participant.

Further, I argue that *ideological stake* plays a role in recognizing benevolent sexism. Ideological stake refers to a heightened psychological awareness or belief in ideas relevant to benevolent sexism that a woman brings to the situation. Women may have a heightened ideological stake if they already greatly endorse the ideas of benevolent sexism. I believe that women who endorse benevolent sexism would
naturally favor the asymmetrical position between men and women, and more favorably evaluate a man with benevolent attitudes.

Moreover, I hypothesize that ideological stake can be heightened by merely reminding women of culturally-shared ideas that support gender asymmetry. Jost and Kay (2005) found that by reminding women of gender stereotypes and benevolent sexism (e.g., women are communal, pure) increased support for system justification of gender hierarchy than by women who were not exposed to these stereotypes (Studies 1 and 2). Further, they found that personal endorsement of these stereotypes did not affect or predict the results; instead, just activating these gender-role concepts was enough to produce support for gender-based hierarchy (Jost & Kay, 2005). I follow these results with a procedure that also reminds women of stereotypic gender-role behaviors, which I believe creates a heightened ideological relevance for women. I expand on Jost and Kay’s (2005) results by also exposing women to gender counter-stereotypic reminders, or egalitarian gender roles, which may serve to decrease ideological stake in romanticized situations with men.

In the following chapters, I describe a series of studies that explore when women are more or less likely to recognize benevolent sexism from a romanticized male other. Specifically, I consider that ideological endorsement of hostile and benevolent sexism, priming of traditional and egalitarian gender roles, and situational manipulations may increase women’s sense of stake in the situation. In turn, as these factors increase the desire for women to want to interact with a male partner, women should be less likely to detect and label subtle sexism.
Chapter 8: Study 1

Overview

Study 1 examines the effect of gender-role messages in relation to labeling hostile and benevolent sexism. Study 1 evaluated women’s pre-existing ambivalent sexism (ASI) beliefs prior to the execution of the study. The study itself primed either traditional, egalitarian, or neutral gender-role messages, and used these to measure the degree to which one evaluated comments that were hostile or subjectively benevolent ideas about men and women. Specifically, participants read either a hostile or benevolent version of a profile of a male target who they believed was helping to pilot test a University of Connecticut dating website. This study is designed (as were the following studies) to make salient romantic relationships. Under this veil, I believe that there will be interesting differences in the ways in which women characterize the target and his comments about women and men in relationships. I assess whether ideological endorsement and manipulation of gender roles affects women’s ability to recognize subtle and possibly even overt sexism. In the following three studies, I measure how much participants label a target’s comments as sweet, sexist, controlling, and common. Further, I assess whether participants would want to interact or become closer with the target. Finally I measure the degree to which participants think the target would be a relationship partner who would cherish, control, or abuse a potential girlfriend. Below, I outline several main hypotheses for Study 1.

Hypothesis A. First, I predict a main effect of profile type, such that female participants who read the hostile profile will be most likely to label the target male’s comments as sexist, compared to those who read the benevolent profile.
In addition, those who read the benevolent profile should be more likely to label his comments as sweet, have a greater desire to interact with this person, and believe this person would be a caring relationship partner.

Hypothesis B. Second, I anticipate a main effect of gender-role prime, such that women should be less likely to label sexism from the male target after being exposed to the traditional gender-role message, compared to women exposed to the egalitarian message condition. The traditional message condition should also elicit women to label him as sweet, want to interact with him, and have a more positive perception of relationship quality with him than those primed with the egalitarian message. I believe that the responses from those in the neutral condition will be more similar to those in the traditional condition than those in the egalitarian condition.

Hypothesis C. Further, I expect an additive effect of profile and prime. Women primed by the egalitarian message should be most likely to label sexism, followed by participants primed by the traditional message condition. I expect this pattern across both hostile and benevolent target conditions, however the means for labeling sexism should be higher in the hostile condition than in the benevolent condition.

Hypothesis D. Finally, considering prior ideological investment, women who more highly endorse benevolent and hostile sexism are generally more tolerant of gender-based hierarchy. Therefore, high endorsers of HS and BS are expected to
be overall less likely to label sexism than those who are less tolerant of benevolent sexism and hostile sexism. These patterns should also significantly predict outcomes such as attitudes about the target, their desire to interact with the target, and opinions about his qualities as a relationship partner. High endorsers of BS and HS should have more favorable attitudes toward the target and more of a desire to get close to the target, compared to low endorsers.

Method

Participants

One hundred and seventy two University of Connecticut undergraduate women enrolled in an Introductory Psychology course participated in this first study, and received one experimental course credit in return. The sample was predominantly White (87%), and on average, 18.72 years old ($SD = 1.14$).

Measures

All scale ratings were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree). After reverse-coding appropriate items, higher mean numbers mean more of the construct.

Ambivalent Sexism. The 22-item Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick & Fiske, 1996) was completed by all participants in a mass pre-screening session a few weeks before taking part in this study. Pre-screening scores were later matched to participants in the study via identification numbers. The scale is broken into two sub-scales: benevolent sexism (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .79$) and hostile sexism (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .79$). Benevolent and hostile sexism scores were used as a measure of ideological stake.

Web-Evaluation. Traditional and egalitarian gender-role messages were primed by having participants navigate around one of three websites (see Procedure for details). To
keep the consistency of the cover story, a short survey evaluating the efficacy and interest in the website was administered. Participants indicated how effective, attractive, interesting, and user-friendly the websites were (Cronbach’s α = .88).

**Affect.** The standardized Multiple Adjective Affect Checklist (MAACL-R; Zuckerman, Lubin, & Rinck, 1983) was used to ensure that the website prime did not differentially affect one’s mood. Sub-scales of the MAACL-R are broken down into anxiety (Cronbach’s α = .64), depression (Cronbach’s α = .72), and hostility (Cronbach’s α = .71).

**Attitudes Toward Target.** Several questions were used to determine participant’s initial impressions of the target male, including perceptions of attractiveness, likeability, desirability, respectability, and whether she agreed with his comments (Cronbach’s α = .95).

Participants also completed a feeling thermometer measure, which asked them to rate their initial feelings toward the target on a 100-point scale (1 = cold, 100 = warm).

**Closeness.** Next, participants rated the degree of social interaction they would consider in relation to the target male student. Nine items were presented in a general ascending order of closeness. Participants were asked rate their desire to do each of the following on a Likert-type scale: email him, have a phone conversation, study together, meet for coffee, go on a date, introduce him to friends, introduce him to family, have a casual sexual relationship, and have a serious romantic relationship. These items were highly reliable (Cronbach’s α = .93), and were combined into one composite variable called “closeness.”

Participants also completed a version of the Inclusion of Other in Self scale (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992). This scale depicts a series of two overlapping circles, shown
from not at all overlapping to completely overlapping. Participants were instructed to pick the figure that best represents how close they would like to be with the target male, rated on a 1 to 7 ascending scale.

Labeling Comments. As a main dependent measure, participants rated a list of adjectives indicating the degree to which they found that adjective to relate to the target’s comments. The adjectives were later clustered as being labeled as: “sweet” (sweet, chivalrous, romantic, and exhilarating) (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .90$), “sexist” (sexist, disrespectful, degrading, offensive, and hostile) (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .94$), “controlling” (controlling and possessive) (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .88$), and “common” (ordinary and common) (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .89$). When all the variables were entered into a principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation, three separate components were extracted. The sweet and sexist items loaded onto the same factor (although sweet was negatively loaded), which explained 52% of the variance (eigenvalue = 6.75). Next, controlling and possessive loaded onto its own factor, explaining an additional 17% of the variance (eigenvalue = 2.16). Finally, common and ordinary produced a third component, explaining 10% of the variance (eigenvalue = 1.32). Although sweet and sexist loaded onto the same factor structure, they are conceptually unique from each other, and for the purposes of our data analysis, they have been separated into two variables. Four composite variables were calculated (sweet, sexist, controlling, and common) using the combined set of means for each.

Relationship Quality. A list of items were used to gauge participant’s evaluations of how the target man would treat a female relationship partner. Participants were asked, “Do you think he would be someone who would...” and then rated the following items with their agreement. The first group of items consisted of positive behaviors enacted toward a girlfriend: care for her, cherish, protect, provide, listen to her thoughts, ask for her ideas
and opinions, and be genuinely interested in her goals and aspirations (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .96$). These items were combined into one composite variable called “cherish.” A second cluster of items reflected potentially abusive behaviors: be possessive, control her behavior, make decisions for her, limit socialization outside the relationship, intimidate her, and use physical force or threats (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .89$). According to a principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation, two distinct components were extracted from all of the items, with the positive behaviors (e.g., cherish) loading onto the first factor (eigenvalue = 7.04), accounting for 54% of the variance, and negative behaviors loading onto the second factor (eigenvalue = 3.12), accounting for 24% of the variance. However, because of theoretical reasons, I clustered possessive and controlling into one variable (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .88$) and decision-making, socialization, intimidation, and physical force into another variable (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .87$). Because controlling and possessive are subjectively subtle and may even be perceived as a positive characteristic (synonymous with being protective), I wanted to distinguish this from overt characteristics of abuse. The former will be referred to as “controlling” and the latter will be referred to as “abusive.”

Demographics. Finally participants completed several demographic questions, indicating their age and ethnicity. Several questions were also included about their career and family decisions for later in life, including how much income they expect to generate (“income”), whether they want to have children (“children”), and if so, what proportion of time per week they would want to spend on their job versus on childrearing (“portion”).

Procedure

Students chose to register for a study entitled, “Evaluating Websites and People” via an on-line psychology participant pool website. The cover story explained that the study was interested in understanding various factors that affect students’ everyday
college life. A cover story introduced the study as one that would have students make judgments of an internet website and an evaluation of another person:

Each day, college students have interactions in many forms – some are face-to-face and increasingly, others are on the internet. Two things we are interested in understanding are students’ use of the internet and social relationships with others. Both are day-to-day factors that impact our lives. In the first part of this study, you will be asked to navigate around a particular website, to give us an idea of what students find most interesting and user-friendly. Second, we are interested in what goes into social relationships in college. We will ask you to evaluate another student, and give your thoughts on how a relationship with this person would be.

After consenting to be a part of the study, a female experimenter brought participants to a cubicle with a computer. The entire study was computer-based and was programmed in MediaLab software (Jarvis, 2002). The programmed study reviewed the cover story for the participants once sitting at the cubicle and then guided her to one of three randomly assigned websites. The purpose of this manipulation was to act as a proxy for making salient either a traditional or egalitarian gender-role message (or no gender-role message, via a “neutral” website), and then see how these messages impacted their evaluations of a target male. Participants were given a sheet (dependent on their condition) which directed them to locate three separate links within the website once at the homepage, using a specific chain of links. The purpose of this was to control the content that participants were exposed to and also direct them to content that was most explicitly related to our ideological manipulation. For the traditional website, one third of the participants were directed to a wedding planning website, www.theknot.com, which ideologically reinforces traditionally feminine gender roles and behaviors, specifically the importance of getting married and planning an ideal wedding. Participants in this condition were asked to find articles about the most romantic ways to propose and traditional ceremony vows.
Another third of the participants were taken to view a website that reinforces more egalitarian gender roles and behaviors, www.advancingwomen.com. This is a website geared toward women in the professional workforce and public life. In this condition, participants were asked to find articles about young women getting their foot in the door for their careers and balancing work and family life. In the control condition, the rest of the participants were brought to view a travel website, www.fodors.com. These participants were asked to find links to neutral topics, such as articles on tips for better packing strategies and fall foliage. All participants were given directions to spend roughly five minutes navigating around the website. After they were done browsing, they completed a short evaluative survey about the website, partially serving as a manipulation check that they had gotten the message of what the website was about. Immediately after the website manipulation, participants complete the MAACL.

Participants remained at their computers for the second portion of the study. The instructions first described that with the rise of on-line technology, dating websites have become increasingly popular, and researchers at UConn are considering implementing its own website geared to UConn students. It explained that we are piloting a rough draft of a website and are interested in how students would evaluate the website. Toward that end, participants were advised that they would be reading a profile of a male student at UConn who had submitted information for the pilot project. His “profile” included information such as his height, major, hobbies and interests (which remained the same for all participants), and his ideal relationship. Profiles were manipulated by either presenting overtly hostile ideas about an ideal relationship (e.g., “I want a girl who looks good in a pair of jeans and knows which remote control to use”) or subjectively benevolent ideals (e.g., “If I met the girl of my dreams, I would treat her like a queen”) (see Appendix A for
full profile). Many of the comments from both the benevolent and hostile profiles, including the quotes mentioned above, were taken from actual comments posted on real online dating websites, such as Match.com and JDate. Participants then provided evaluations of the target male student, his comments, whether they would be interested in getting closer to him, and their thoughts about what he would be like in a relationship. Last, participants completed their own demographic information. Upon completing all measures, participants were debriefed by the experimenter to the true nature of the study and the experimenter addressed any questions or concerns.

Results

Manipulation Checks

Immediately after navigating around their respective websites, participants completed a short evaluation of the website and a manipulation check to ascertain that they understood what the website was generally about. Participants were 98% accurate about understanding the message of the websites, such as “the ideal way to propose” for the traditional website, “women are strong and can be good leaders” for the egalitarian website, and “how to travel and pack efficiently” for the neutral website. A general composite variable, “liked website,” was computed to gauge one’s general attitudes about the website, which revealed a large significant difference based on prime, \( F(2, 169) = 29.05, p < .001 \). Website evaluations suggested that participants enjoyed being at the wedding website best (\( M = 4.41, SE = .22 \)), then the travel website (\( M = 4.14, SE = .18 \)), and then the career website (\( M = 2.84, SE = .21 \)). A Tukey post-hoc test garnered that there were no reliable differences in attitudes between the wedding and travel websites. However, attitudes differed significantly between the egalitarian (\( M = 3.24, SE = .16 \)) and the other two websites (\( Ms > 4.5 \)). This variable was used as a covariate in the following analyses.
Affect

Following the website evaluation, participants completed the MAACL to assess their levels of anxiety, depression, and hostility as a possible result of viewing the websites. A MANCOVA indicated that prime did not have a significant multivariate effect on the dependent measures, $F(8, 114) = .667, ns$. The websites did not induce significantly different levels of depression, hostility, or anxiety. The covariate, evaluations of the website, had an overall significant effect on the dependent measures, $F(8, 114) = 3.78, p < .01$. The more participants liked the website, the less they were anxious, depressed, and hostile.

Analysis of Variance

The main analyses were conducted as 2 (Profile: benevolent, hostile) x 3 (Prime: traditional, egalitarian, neutral) ANCOVAs on each of the dependent variables. Further, because quality of the website proved to be significantly different between the websites, this was included as a covariate in the following analyses.

Attitudes Toward Target. After being presented with either the benevolent or hostile profile (benevolent = 1, hostile = 2), participants gave their general ratings of the target male, assessed as attractive, desirable, respectful, likeable, and agreement with his comments. There was an overwhelming main effect of profile, such that participants liked the man with the benevolent profile ($M = 5.37, SD = .17$) more than the hostile profile ($M = 3.69, SD = .14$) according to an ANCOVA, $F(1, 165) = 86.87, p < .001$. There were no significant effects of prime, $F(2, 165) = 1.37, ns$. The effect of the covariate was also not significant, $F(1, 165) = .002, ns$.

The feeling thermometer was assessed as a second measure of attitudes toward the target. Again, there was only a robust effect for profile, such that participants rated the
benevolent target as “warmer” ($M = 76.92, SD = 2.29$) than the hostile target ($M = 53.39, SD = 2.59$), $F(1, 165) = 46.35, p < .001$. There was neither an effect of prime nor an interaction. The effect of the covariate was not significant either, $F(1, 165) = .07, ns$.

**Desire for Closeness.** A 2 x 3 ANCOVA assessed whether the participants could envision themselves getting closer to the benevolent profile than the hostile profile in the ways we presented to them. Because all of the items were strongly correlated, one composite dependent variable was used. There was a strong main effect of profile, $F(1, 165) = 36.56, p < .001$. Participants in the benevolent profile condition reported more desire to interact with the target ($M = 4.76, SD = .14$) than the hostile profile ($M = 3.50, SD = .16$). There was no effect of prime, $F(2, 165) = .03, ns$, or the covariate, $F(1, 165) = .75, ns$.

**Inclusion of Other in Self.** An ANCOVA on the IOS scale also revealed only a main effect of profile, $F(1, 165) = 28.26, p < .001$, such that participants could see themselves as more closely overlapping with the man with the benevolent profile ($M = 3.41, SD = .12$) than with the hostile profile ($M = 2.48, SD = .13$). There was no effect of prime, $F(2, 165) = .27, ns$, or the covariate, $F(1, 165) = .15, ns$.

**Labeling Comments.** A series of 2 x 3 ANCOVAs were run on labeling the target’s comments as sweet, sexist, controlling, and common, using website evaluations as the covariate. The first ANCOVA showed a robust main effect of profile, $F(1, 165) = 334.49, p < .001$. The comments of the benevolent man were labeled as significantly more sweet ($M = 5.17, SD = .10$) than those of the hostile man ($M = 2.43, SD = .11$). There were no significant effects of prime, $F(2, 165) = 1.35, ns$, or the covariate, $F(1, 165) = .02, ns$.

Likewise, there was also a robust effect of profile on labeling the target’s comments as sexist, $F(1, 165) = 115.17, p < .001$. Participants recognized the hostile profile’s
comments as more sexist \((M = 4.48, SD = .15)\) than the benevolent profile’s comments \((M = 2.31, SD = .13)\). There was no significant main effect of prime, \(F (2, 165) = .66, ns\).

Also, the covariate was not significant, \(F (1, 165) = 3.34, ns\).

There were no differences between groups on labeling comments as controlling and possessive. Neither profile, \(F (1, 165) = 1.86, ns\), nor prime, \(F (2, 165) = 1.29, ns\), were significant. Participants felt generally neutral about whether the target’s comments were controlling \((M = 4.01, SD = .13)\). There was not a significant effect of the covariate either, \(F (1, 165) = .27, ns\).

A final variable assessed how common or ordinary participants found the target’s comments. Again, a strong effect for profile appeared, \(F (1, 165) = 53.28, p < .001\), such that participants rated the hostile comments to be more common and ordinary \((M = 4.52, SD = .15)\) than the benevolent comments \((M = 3.30, SD = .14)\). Likewise, there was no main effect of prime, \(F (2, 165) = .89, ns\), and the covariate was not significant, \(F (1, 165) = .07, ns\).

**Relationship Quality.** An ANCOVA assessed whether participants would find the target as someone who would cherish a girlfriend. The results revealed a strong main effect of profile, \(F (1, 165) = 236.18, p < .001\), such that those who read the benevolent profile were much more likely to think the target would cherish a girlfriend \((M = 5.77, SD = .11)\) than those who read the hostile profile \((M = 3.14, SD = .13)\). There was no main effect of prime, \(F (2, 165) = 1.60, ns\), and no significant effect of the covariate, \(F (1, 165) = 1.00, ns\).

A second ANCOVA revealed a main effect of profile on believing the target would be a controlling relationship partner, \(F (1, 165) = 6.93, p < .01\). Interestingly, participants believed the benevolent target would be someone who would be controlling or possessive over his girlfriend \((M = 4.51, SD = .17)\) over the hostile target \((M = 3.87, SD = .19)\). There
was no effect of prime, $F(2, 165) = 2.49, ns$, but a significant effect of the covariate, such that those who liked the websites evaluated him as more controlling, $F(1, 165) = 4.09, p < .05$.

Third, an ANCOVA was tested on believing the target would abuse a girlfriend. Again, results showed a main effect of profile, $F(1, 165) = 9.32, p < .003$ such that participants thought the hostile target would be more likely to abuse his girlfriend ($M = 4.01, SD = .16$) than the benevolent profile ($M = 3.38, SD = .14$). The univariate effect of prime was not significant, $F(2, 165) = 2.11, ns$. However, there was a significant effect of the covariate, $F(1, 165) = 4.68, p < .03$, such that those who liked the websites more found him less likely to be abusive.

**Future Plans.** Participants were asked about their plans in the future, specifically 1) how much income they anticipated generating in their future career, on average, 2) whether or not they planned on having children, and 3) what proportion of their time they would want spent on childcare vs. working outside the home for pay (from 0% to 100%). A series of ANCOVA analyses were run. First, there were no significant effects of profile, $F(1, 127) = .53, ns$, prime, $F(2, 127) = .76, ns$, or the covariate, $F(1, 127) = .04, ns$, on the amount of income participants expected. Participants generally estimated that they will be earning between $60-70,000 in their careers.

A second analysis was conducted on whether or not the participants reported wanting to have children. There was a main effect of profile on whether participants planned on having children, $F(1, 119) = 3.90, p < .05$. Participants who read the benevolent profile were slightly more likely to say that they would like to have children in the future than those who read the hostile profile. Fifty-eight percent of those who read the
benevolent profile indicated that they wanted children, compared to 42% of those who read the hostile profile.

Finally, there were no effects of profile, $F (1, 127) = 1.91$, $ns$, or prime, $F (2, 127) = .12$, $ns$, on the portion of time participants wanted to spend on care-giving or working outside the house. Participants generally agree that they will spend approximately half of their time caring for children and half working outside the home. However, the covariate was significant, $F (1, 127) = 4.75$, $p < .03$, such that those who liked the website more also indicated wanting to spend more time working outside the house.

**Correlations**

In addition to our main independent variables (profile and prime), measures of individual difference on the ambivalent sexism inventory (ASI) were collected – specifically on hostile sexism (HS) and benevolent sexism (BS). A Pearson’s correlation matrix was run, consisting of three general groups of variables: those manipulated in the study, the personality variables, and the dependent measures – labeling, closeness, and relationship quality. As we would expect from the analyses so far, the correlation matrix (Table 1) shows that profile is significantly related to all of the dependent measures (all $r_s > .25$, $p < .01$), such that women were more likely to judge the hostile profile as both sexist and common, and think the man would abuse a girlfriend, and were less likely to like him, want to get close to him, label his comments as sweet, and think he would cherish a girlfriend. Profile was also negatively related to likelihood to be controlling in a relationship ($r = -.18$, $p < .05$), corroborating that the benevolent profile was judged as more controlling. Profile was not related to website evaluations ($r = .00$, $ns$).

Prime was dummy coded into three separate variables (coded as 0 = not primed, 1 = primed). All three primes were significantly related to evaluations of the website.
Those that saw the traditional and neutral websites evaluated them more positively ($r = .32, p < .01$ and $r = .16, p < .05$), and those that saw the egalitarian website evaluated it more negatively ($r = -.49, p < .01$). Prime was not significantly related to any other variable.

HS was positively related to BS ($r = .24, p < .01$), such that the more one endorsed hostile sexism, the more likely they also endorsed benevolent sexism. However, HS and BS were not significantly related to prime, profile, or any of the dependent measures. Therefore, HS and BS do not seem to provide any predictive utility beyond the manipulation of profile, which remains significantly associated with the rest of the variables. Thus, this suggests that the manipulation of profile was the biggest contributing factor in revealing differences in evaluating the profile and noticing sexism.

**Study 1 Discussion**

Study 1 found that while women clearly label overtly hostile comments about gender roles as sexist, they are less likely to label comments about gender roles as sexist when they are subtle and sound romantic. Compared to an overtly sexist man, participants were less likely to evaluate benevolent comments, which spoke of protecting and providing for women, as sexist or potentially abusive. Further, Study 1 also sought to examine whether making salient traditional or more egalitarian gender roles has an effect on how women perceive and interpret instances of hostile and benevolent sexism. Does reminding women about traditional and romantic gender-role scripts, including ideal weddings and perfect proposals, lead them to minimize the degree to which they label sexism from a male source? The results unfortunately did not support this hypothesis. There were no differential effects found in priming messages from the
various websites in subsequent evaluations of a hostile or benevolent profile. However, several stable effects can be interpreted from Study 1.

Effect of Profile

Study 1 did succeed in consistently finding a stable difference in the way participants evaluated the benevolent profile versus the hostile profile. Overall, participants attributed more negative evaluations and sexism to the hostile profile than the benevolent profile, as was expected. Participants judged the hostile profile as someone they personally did not want to get close with and someone that would potentially abuse a girlfriend (e.g., limit her socialization with others, use intimidation or force) than the benevolent profile. It is important to remember though that some of the means (i.e., abusive) were generally around the midpoint of the 7-point scale. This suggests that participants did not overtly think the hostile target would be abusive, but considered it here more than of the benevolent profile.

Participants were also more likely to judge the benevolent profile more positively, thought his comments were more sweet, and strongly agreed that he would be a caring relationship partner. However, this effect was not surprising since the comments in the profile were overtly paternalistic (“I believe women should be protected,” “I’d plan our life so she wouldn’t have to worry about anything”). These results generally confirm previous research, which shows that women do not see benevolent sexism as sexist or detrimental, but instead find it sweet, romantic, and chivalrous (Glick & Fiske, 1996; 2001).

One surprising effect of profile was found on assessing the target as someone who would be controlling or possessive as a relationship partner. The results indicate that participants thought the target with the benevolent profile would be more controlling and possessive. Originally, it was hypothesized that participants in the hostile condition would
be higher, because they would see this as a negative relationship quality. However, it does make sense that participants would attribute phrases such as “I’d plan our life so she wouldn’t have to worry about anything” as controlling. It is interesting that even under the good-natured, romantic guise, women detected and labeled it as controlling. Detecting and labeling comments such as this is an empowering, necessary step in moving toward equality in interpersonal relationships.

However, this result does place the effects of labeling sexism in an awkward spot. Why would women define these comments as behaviors that are controlling and possessive, but not sexist? A factor analysis on the dependent measures detected three separate factor structures – cherishing, controlling, and abusive. The questions themselves were relatively similar; participants were asked whether the target would be someone controlling or possessive, someone who would make most of the decisions, or limit her socialization with others, for example. It would seem intuitive that a relationship partner who makes all of the decisions and places restrictions on social activities is controlling. The latter two, however, loaded onto a different factor than the former. So, to return to the previous question, what is being interpreted by controlling or possessive behavior? It seems that the benevolent profile cues women to think about men protecting and providing for women, and this is interpreted as controlling behavior in a paternalistic way. However, more overt forms power and control are not associated with this target. This is a disquieting effect, since more abusive relationships begin with subtle patterns of controlling behavior, guised under love, jealousy, and protection. Thus, perhaps it is still the case that women have a harder time drawing the line between what constitutes sexism and what does not, and largely believe that something that appears good can not possibly hurt.
Study 2 will focus on impressions of benevolent sexism in more detail. Because women seem somewhat ambivalent about BS, such as finding it both sweet and controlling, I will focus more specifically on what affects evaluations of benevolent ideologies. I continue to consider gender-role ideologies and situational factors.

Effect of HS and BS

Endorsement of hostile and benevolent sexism were not found to be significantly associated with any of the dependent variables. This is surprising, as those who endorse the ideas of benevolent sexism in theory are more likely to believe in the paternalistic nature of male – female relationships. I expected those who were low endorsers to be more likely to notice the comments, and specifically the hostile comments, as sexist, controlling, and abusive. However, prior ideology did not prove to have a significant effect on any of the dependent variables, which is consistent with Jost and Kay’s (2005) finding. In their study as well, situational manipulations accounted for the between-group differences in support for sexism.

Effect of Prime

Unfortunately, participants’ reactions to the stimulus also did not differ on account of the gender-role message primed, unlike Jost and Kay’s (2005) research. There were no significant differences on the dependent measures as a result of making salient either traditional, egalitarian, or neutral gender-role messages.

First, there is the concern that participants left with different impressions about the three websites. Generally participants enjoyed being at the traditional website much more than they liked being at the egalitarian website. This could be a general difference in the quality of the websites, as theknot.com was significantly more interactive and had many links, pictures, and articles. Although a substantial effort was made to control for the
quality of the websites, advancingwomen.com was one of the best choices in content compared to other, more flashy, websites that did not focus specifically on women and work. Other websites were found that were more similar in appearance to theknot.com, but were focused on equal parenting or the division of labor in the household, which would have probably seem even more removed from a college student’s current life than ideas about work.

Further, perhaps being made to think about weddings and future relationships was associated with something more innately positive - happiness and celebration, whereas the career website was less associated with positivity. The career website engendered thoughts about future careers and work. People often do not like to think about work as much as they like to think about celebratory events or milestones, such as getting married or going on vacation. The latter are inherently more positive in nature, despite attempts to make the control website less attractive (i.e., reading an article about better packing tips). To a young adult just beginning college, career-related thoughts perhaps brought about confusion or stress about the work needed to be done to attain one’s goals. However, there were no reliable differences in levels of depression, anxiety, or hostility according to the MAACL, suggesting that these differences did not alter the way participants were momentarily feeling.

Finally, on a meta-cognitive level, what was actually being primed? Were participants really made to think about gender-roles? Or, were the websites too specific in nature? While getting married and planning a wedding was originally conceived of as a traditional gender-role act, this may not have been what came to mind for the participants. Further, the egalitarian website may not have meant anything significantly modern to the participants, who are all in college and report future career goals as well as family plans.
Young women might not see these dual-roles as contemporary and egalitarian, since they have been brought up in a culture that for the most part does recognize women as an active part of the workforce. Further pilot testing should have been done to assess these concerns. Despite the concerns raised about the quality, fit, and role of the website manipulation, I believe that the websites may have an effect that was not captured in this study. Women in this study were responding to a mundane scenario. While this was disguised as a project that was happening on their home campus (i.e., on-line dating website), and was framed in a romantic guise, the judgments still did not hold great personal relevance for the participant. Perhaps certain aspects of the experiment, including the website manipulation, were too removed from the participant’s own life. According to the self-referencing theory, when information is related to the self, individuals are more likely to attend to it and process it at a deeper level (Baumeister, 1998; Bower & Gilligan, 1979; Rogers, Kuiper, & Kirker, 1977). Mashek, Aron, and Boncimino (2003) replicated the well-documented finding that material related to the self is better encoded and remembered, but also found that information related to close or romantic others was also processed better than non-close others. Theoretically, they argue that people can confuse information related to the self and close others because close others are closely associated to cognitions about the self, and reflects a process of mentally “including another in the self” (Mashek et al., 2003; Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992). Further, while the first study does not directly test female participants’ evaluations of actual romantic prospects, the context of the situation uses a frame (i.e., dating website) that emphasizes romantic relationships. Study 1 brings attention to ideas and behaviors that are associated with either idealized traditional gender norms (e.g., marriage, romance) or more contemporary ideas about gender (e.g., working women, financial independence). I hypothesized that invoking
thoughts about relationships might have immediate effects on whether women recognize overt and subtle expressions of sexism. However, because women were not faced with a relationship prospect themselves, perhaps this was not an accurate assumption. I continue to believe that a situational manipulation of relationship stake might garner these predicted effects.

In Study 2, I attempt to make the manipulation more relevant to the participants by engaging them in a fictitious on-line dating paradigm, in which they anticipate an actual meeting with another male student who was ostensibly hand-selected for them. I expect that as women come closer to an actual interaction with a potential partner, the less she will notice and label sexism from her experimental partner. Specifically, as situational stake increases, the ability to label sexism should decrease. Perhaps presenting participants in Study 2 with this manipulation will lead to deeper processing of the website stimuli and subsequent information presented, garnering more conclusive results. Study 2 tests a situational aspect of stake in a romanticized context more precisely.
Chapter 8: Study 2

Overview

Study 2 continues to have participants evaluate the comments of a male target. In this study however, all participants evaluate the same benevolent profile (now also referred to as “self-description”) of another fictitious male student who is thought to be participating in the study as well. Though it is important to recognize what women do label as sexism, it is a harder and more complicated question to ask what factors influence labeling subtle and good-natured comments as sexist. This question is important, because overlooking subtle forms of sexism can have the cumulative effect of maintaining hierarchy between men and women.

Although Study 1 did not reveal differential effects between viewing traditional or egalitarian gender-role messages, I continue to believe that being primed by such messages can impact judgments. Because Study 1 had participants view the websites and judge the target’s comments without any personal relevance, participants may not have attended to the website manipulation in context. However, Study 2 makes the situation more personally-relevant by leading participants to believe that they will be interacting with a male partner, which may have allow them to attend to subsequent information better (Celsi & Olson, 1988; Rogers et al., 1977).

Specifically, in Study 2, I introduce a manipulation of situational stake. As Ropp (2004) found, women were less likely to label sexism from a close male other than a non-close other. I experimentally expand on a similar paradigm, in which being “matched” to a partner could elicit participants to feel more of a sense of personal relevance and interest in the situation (e.g., stake). In Study 2, every participant is led to believe that she will be meeting and interacting with a male student. Half of the participants are randomly assigned
to the “matched” condition, where they were told that the student they are about to interact with was selected as a good romantic match for her, according to a personality profile gathered during pre-screening data collection. The other half of the participants were not given this additional information. This manipulation was meant to function as a proxy for heightening the level of personal involvement, or stake, which may manifest into varied perceptions of their partner. Specifically, when a situation is tied to a potential personal or romantic stake, will women’s judgments of another male be different than when she is interacting with a mundane other?

The same dependent measures were collected as in Study 1, including participants’ general attitudes toward their partners, willingness to interact more closely with their partner, labeling his comments as sweet, sexist, controlling, and common, and believing he would be likely to cherish, control, or abuse a relationship partner. The following are hypothesized effects for Study 2:

_Hypothesis A._ Although Study 1 did not find any significant patterns with respect to the prime manipulation, I propose the same hypothesized pattern of main effects for gender-role message in Study 2. Participants should be least likely to label sexism after primed with the traditional gender-role message condition, and most likely to label it in the egalitarian message condition. Further, the traditional prime should lead participants to associate their partner with more positive attributes as an individual and a relationship partner, and prompt them to want to interact more closely with him than those in the egalitarian condition.
Hypothesis B. I also expect a series of main effects of matched condition, such that those who believe they are matched with their experimental partners should be less likely to label their partner’s comments as sexist in comparison to those who are not told that they are matched. Further, those who are matched should be more likely to evaluate their partners more positively and have a greater desire to get close to him.

Hypothesis C. Third, I propose that there will be a significant two-way interaction between message condition and matched status, such that those who are matched and given a traditional message should be least likely to label sexism and controlling behavior, and most likely to want to be closer to the target, and believe he is a good relationship partner. Those in the non-matched and egalitarian conditions should show just the reverse. Although the latter values are expected to be subjectively high overall as well, because they are anticipating an interaction with someone who holds subjectively benevolent ideas, they should be significantly different from those with a higher situational and ideological stake.

Hypothesis D. Those with higher prior ASI scores should more positively evaluate their partner’s comments than those who have lower agreement with the ASI. High BS and HS should predict more labeling the target’s comments as sweet, desire to get close, and more positive relationship quality. BS and HS should be negatively related to labeling the comments as sexist, desire to get close, and positive relationship quality.
Hypothesis E. Self-reported feelings of stake, as captured by a new measure, should also be significantly related to both the independent and dependent measures. Those in the traditional prime and matched conditions should feel more stake than those in the egalitarian prime and non-matched conditions. Further, feeling more of a stake should be positively related to labeling comments as sweet, desire to get close, and assessing their partner as a positive relationship partner, and be negatively related to labeling their partner’s comments as sexist, controlling, and abusive. Finally, contingent on whether stake significantly predicts both the independent and the outcome variables, I predict that stake can play a mediating role between several of the independent variables and the dependent variables. For example, I will conduct analyses to test whether stake is a mediator between HS and BS and labeling sexism. I predict that the more one endorses HS and BS, the more stake they will feel, and in turn, the less they will label sexism.

Method

Participants

Two hundred and four undergraduate women were recruited for the study through the experimental participant pool as a course requirement for Introductory Psychology classes. Participants varied in age from 18 to 23 years old, with an average of 18.44 years old ($SD = .98$). A majority of the participants were White (88%). One hundred and ninety nine women were heterosexual, one was lesbian, one was bisexual, and two did not indicate a sexual orientation.

Measures

Participants based their opinions of the target male on a description about his hobbies, interests, and ideas about romantic relationships. The target expressed
predominantly benevolent ideas about relationships, and used a modified version of the benevolent profile shown in Study 1 (see Appendix B for full description).

ASI scores were collected prior to running Study 2 data collection in a mass testing session. As in Study 1, the same measures of evaluating the target, labeling his comments, desire for closeness, and relationship quality were used as the main dependent variables. The MAACL-R (Zuckerman et al., 1983) was also used to assess affect after the website manipulation. Evaluations of the websites and demographic information, including future career and family plans were also collected. In addition, several new measures were added to Study 2.

_Ansi*try in New Situations._ Because participants were told that they would be meeting and interacting with another person, they were asked whether they are generally anxious in social situations and with people they have never met before. Four questions were used to assess apprehension in interacting with an unfamiliar partner. The following items were used: *I get anxious in new situations, I get nervous before meeting new people, I am comfortable in new situations* (reverse-coded), *I enjoy new situations* (reverse-coded) (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .78$).

_Stake._ Additionally, a new questionnaire was used that expressly measured participants’ feelings of stake in the interaction, as a function of her involvement, interest, and gain in the situation. The following 6 items were used: *I feel I would have something to gain in a relationship with this person, I would be strongly invested in this relationship, I want to be in a relationship with this person, I would not get very involved in a relationship with this person* (reverse-coded), *I feel there would be a significant purpose for being in a relationship with this person, Leaving this relationship would compromise something important to me.* The items were internally reliable (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .83$).
Future Contact. Before the conclusion of the study, participants had the opportunity to choose whether they would like to take the target’s email address and phone number, via a computer menu. This was a dichotomous measure (yes = 1, no = 2). Participants did not actually receive his information.

Procedure

Students from Introductory Psychology signed up for a study entitled “Evaluating and Meeting People” via an on-line participant pool website. Participants were entitled to 2 course credits in exchange for 45 minutes of participation. Consenting participants were greeted by a female experimenter, who informed them that there were two parts to the study. As she led participants to a cubicle with a computer, she explained that the first part of the study would be done on the computer, with the goal of understanding how people make judgments of websites and other people. Next, she described that after this was completed, the participants will be brought to a larger room to meet and interact with a partner, who was another (male) student also participating in the study. Participants were assured that the computer will guide them through each phase of the study and let them know when to transition. In actuality, all participants only completed the first portion of the study. The second part was only used to foster the cover story that they would be meeting a male partner.

Participants first read over the same cover story as in Study 1, introducing the first part of the study as wanting students to evaluate things that affect their everyday life, such as the internet. Participants replicated through the website browsing procedure as in Study 1. Participants were randomly assigned to conditions using the same three websites, eliciting either a traditional (www.theknot.com), egalitarian
Participants evaluated features of each website for the sake of keeping mundane realism. Remaining at the cubicle, participants were reminded that we were also interested in how people evaluate social relationships. Similar to Study 1, the computer protocol explained that “there has recently been more validity to various dating websites” and we are interested in exploring these connections further (see description below). This cover story set up the manipulation for our second independent variable – being matched or not matched to the partner. In the matched condition, women were told that the male student who they will be meeting with has been selected as a good romantic match for her, based on similar personality information they gave during the pre-screening session. In the non-matched condition, they were not told any information about being matched, and were led to believe that they would be meeting a random male student. In actuality, there was no arranged meeting or male student participating. The following cover story was used, with the matched manipulation highlighted.

For the second part of this study, we are interested in how social relationships can play a part of your college life. There has recently been more psychological validity to various dating websites, such as www.eharmony.com. Research conducted on these sites give promising hope that by matching certain personality characteristics and traits, romantic relationships are more inclined to grow and succeed.

Based on some information you submitted during the pre-screening session at the beginning of the semester, we selected another person who is similar to you in psychological and personality variables. Based on the information both of you gave, we assessed that he would be a good match for you.

In a few minutes, you are going to be brought to a bigger room to meet and talk with this student. Before doing so, we want to give you both a chance to form a first impression. Please spend a couple of minutes writing a short description about yourself; this can include any information that you would want him to know about you – including hobbies, interests, ideal relationship, etc.
You will both be able to read each other’s self-descriptions before you meet.

The experiment verified that the participants understood that they would be meeting and interacting with another male student who is here for this study. Before participants were ostensibly brought to meet their experimental partners, they were told that each partner would get a chance to make a first impression on the other. Participants were asked to spend a few minutes writing a paragraph describing themselves, such as their hobbies, interests, and feelings about relationships, in order to give their partner an idea of who they are. They were told that their partner will see this description, and they will have a chance to read their partner’s descriptions as well. The partner’s description read similar to the benevolent profile used in Study 1, in a paragraph format. The description was generally very idealistic and romantic, although some of the undertones could possibly be interpreted as sexist or controlling (e.g., “I’d plan our life so she wouldn’t have to worry about anything, like money or bills”). (See Appendix B for profile).

After participants finished writing their self-descriptions, the computer instructed that clicking the “continue” button would automatically send what they had written to a printer in a nearby room, where the experimenter would then give it to the partner. They were also directed to tell the experimenter that they were done with their descriptions. At this point, the experimenter brought participants their partner’s printed descriptions. Participants were informed that they should read over the description and first answer some questions regarding their initial evaluations of their partners before actually meeting them. Participants proceeded to complete the dependent measures. Upon finishing all the dependent measures, the computer prompted the participant to let the experimenter know that they were done with that portion of the study. The experimenter
then asked the participant to collect her belongings and follow her out of the cubicle. On
the way around the corner of the hall, the experimenter stopped at a quiet, remote part of
the hallway, and explained to the participant that the study actually ends here. She then
gently explains to the participant the true nature of the study, and describes that there is
not a real partner to meet. The participants were thoroughly and sensitively debriefed,
and asked questions or comments of the experimenter. A good deal of time was spent
assuring that the participants knew the rationale behind this procedure and manipulation
and walked away feeling satisfied with their participation.
Results

Analyses for Study 2 primarily test for a 3 (prime: traditional, egalitarian, neutral) x 2 (matched, not matched) interaction on the dependent variables.

Manipulation Checks

Participants were extremely accurate in understanding the main message of the website (97%). A one-way ANOVA was performed on participant’s average evaluation of the website they visited, as a function of its usefulness, attractiveness, resourcefulness, enjoyableness, and participant’s likelihood to return. There was a large main effect of prime, $F(2, 201) = 26.92, p < .001$. Participants generally rated the traditional website (theknot.com) much more positively ($M = 5.05, SD = .13$) than the neutral website ($M = 4.56, SD = .13$) and the egalitarian website ($M = 3.76, SD = .12$). As in Study 1, this website evaluation score was used as a covariate in the following analyses.

Affect

Just following the prime manipulation, we assessed participants’ scores on the MAACL. At this point, participants were aware that they were meeting another partner, but did not yet receive the match manipulation. There was no multivariate effect of the prime manipulation on any of the MAACL sub-scales (anxiety, depression, and hostility), $F(6, 398) = 1.90, ns$. All participants generally felt the same low levels of anxiety ($M = 2.7$), depression ($M = 2.6$), and hostility ($M = 2.2$).

Further, I assessed participants’ level of social anxiety in new situations or in meeting new people. However, there was no differential level of social anxiety following the prime manipulation, $F(2, 198) = .46, ns$, according to an ANOVA.

Analysis of Variance
**Attitudes Toward Partner.** A 3 x 2 ANCOVA was conducted on participants’ mean evaluations of how much they liked their partner (i.e., attractiveness, desirability, likability, respectfulness, and whether they agreed with his comments), using website evaluation as a covariate. There was a significant main effect of prime, $F(2, 197) = 3.59, p < .03$, such that participants who saw the traditional and neutral websites evaluated their partners more positively ($M_s = 5.58$ and $5.61$, $SD = .12$) than those who saw the egalitarian website ($M = 5.18$, $SD = .12$). There was no effect of matched status, $F(1, 197) = .59$, ns, nor an interaction. There was however a significant effect of the covariate, $F(1, 197) = 5.01, p < .03$. The more participants liked the website, the more they also liked their partner.

A prime x matched ANCOVA was also conducted on the feeling thermometer variable (1 = cold, 100 = warm). This found a significant effect of prime only, $F(2, 196) = 3.43, p < .03$. Those who saw the egalitarian prime rated the target less warm ($M = 72.29$, $SD = 2.0$) than those who had both the traditional and neutral primes ($M_s = 79$, $SD = 1.9$). There was no effect of matched status, $F(1, 196) = .04$, ns, and the covariate was not statistically significant, $F(1, 196) = .40$, ns.

**Inclusion of Other in Self.** There were no statistically significant effects on the IOS measure by prime, $F(2, 196) = .88$, ns, or matched status, $F(1, 196) = .36$, ns. The covariate, however, was statistically significant, $F(1, 196) = 7.19, p < .01$, such that the more participants liked the website, the closer they felt to their partner.

**Labeling Comments.** Separate ANCOVAs were conducted on the dependent variables of labeling comments as sweet, sexist, controlling, and common. The first ANCOVA assessed whether participants labeled their partner’s description as sweet. There were no significant main effects of either prime, $F(2, 197) = 1.48$, ns, or match, $F(1, 197)$
Stake in Sexism

A second ANCOVA found a significant main effect of prime on perceiving his description as sexist, $F(2, 197) = 4.71, p < .01$. Those who were primed with the egalitarian message were most likely to see his comments as sexist ($M = 2.41, SD = .13$) compared to those primed with the traditional ($M = 1.86, SD = .13$) or neutral messages ($M = 2.11, SD = .13$) (see Figure 1). The covariate was not significant, $F(1, 197) = 3.35, ns$.

Further, a third ANCOVA tested whether participants were more likely to label his description as controlling, as a function of prime or matched status. However, neither prime, $F(2, 197) = .37, ns$, or match, $F(1, 197) = .20, ns$, were statistically significant. The covariate did have a significant effect however, $F(1, 197) = 5.77, p < .02$. Participants were more likely to think the comments were controlling when they liked the website.

Finally, while there was no significant effect of prime, $F(2, 197) = 1.05, ns$, or match, $F(1, 197) = .35, ns$, on labeling his description as common, there was a significant interaction of the two, $F(2, 197) = 3.80, p < .02$. Those who were not matched and saw the traditional prime were least likely to see the target’s comments as common ($M = 2.79, SD = .19$), while those who were not matched and saw the neutral prime were most likely to see his comments as common ($M = 3.50, SD = .19$). (See Figure 2). The covariate was non-significant, $F(1, 197) = 1.92, ns$.

Desire for Closeness. A 3 x 2 ANCOVA was conducted to determine whether there were differences in participants’ desire to interact more closely to their partner based on prime and match. However, the analysis did not reveal any significant differences based on either prime, $F(2, 197) = 1.35, ns$, or matched status, $F(1, 197) = .33, ns$. The covariate also did not have a significant effect, $F(1, 197) = 2.18, ns$. Participants’ scores were
generally at the midpoint (\(M = 4.13, SD = .08\)), feeling relatively neutral about further interactions with him.

**Relationship Quality.** A series of ANCOVAs were conducted to determine how participants viewed their partner as a relationship partner. The first analysis assessed how much partners were thought to cherish a girlfriend. The results show that neither prime, \(F(2, 197) = .78, ns\), nor matched status, \(F(1, 197) = .40, ns\), had a statistically significant effect on believing their partner would cherish his girlfriend. Participants generally believed that he would be someone that would highly care for his girlfriend (\(M = 6.03, SD = .07\)). However, there was an effect of the covariate, \(F(1, 197) = 8.92, p < .01\), such that the more participants liked the website, the more they thought their partner would cherish his girlfriend.

Second, there was only a marginal main effect of prime in believing their partner would control or be possessive over a girlfriend, \(F(2, 197) = 2.45, p < .08\). Results indicated that those primed with an egalitarian message were more likely to believe that their partner would control a girlfriend (\(M = 4.49, SD = .20\)) than those primed with a traditional (\(M = 3.85, SD = .20\)) or a neutral message (\(M = 4.18, SD = .20\)). Tukey’s post-hoc analyses show that only those primed with traditional and egalitarian messages were statistically different from one another (\(p < .03\)). This suggests that while participants didn’t overtly label his specific comments as controlling, the egalitarian prime prompted them to think of his overall behavior toward another as controlling.

There was, however, a significant main effect of prime on whether participants believed their partner would be someone who would potentially abuse a girlfriend (intimidate, use force, make decisions, or limit socializing with others), \(F(2, 197) = 3.75, p < .03\). Those primed with the egalitarian message were more likely to think that their
partner would abuse a girlfriend ($M = 3.44, SD = .16$) than those with the neutral ($M = 3.10, SD = .16$) or traditional messages ($M = 2.81, SD = .16$). (See Table 2 for all means).

**Stake in Relationship.** The composite variable “stake” was computed to assess participants’ investment in a potential relationship with their partner. An ANCOVA revealed a significant effect of prime, $F (2, 185) = 5.25, p < .01$, such that those who were primed by the egalitarian message felt the least amount of stake with their partner ($M = 3.89, SD = .13$) than those with the traditional ($M = 4.46, SD = .13$) or neutral messages ($M = 4.47, SD = .13$). There was no effect of matched status, $F (1, 185) = .12, ns$, and the covariate was not significant, $F (1, 185) = 1.79, ns$.

**Further Contact.** Participants were asked whether they would like to be given their partner’s email address or phone number for future contact. Two logistic regressions were performed on email and phone number. Results indicate that neither prime nor match affected participants’ decision for future contact. The overall models predicting wanting his email address and phone number were not significant, $\chi^2 = 3.13$ and $1.34, ns$, respectively.

**Future Plans.** To get a sense of whether the manipulations affected a participant’s comments about her long-term career and family goals, several ANCOVAs assessed thoughts about how much income she would likely earn, whether she wanted children or not, and what proportion of her time she wanted to allocate to raising children versus work outside the home. First, there were no significant patterns on either prime, $F (2, 153) = .13, ns$, or matched status, $F (1, 153) = .01, ns$, on participants’ estimated yearly income. Participants generally estimated that they would earn between $60,000 and $70,000 in their careers. There was no effect of the covariate, $F (1, 153) = 1.07, ns$. 
Further, there were no between group differences on whether participants reported that they wanted to have children or not, $F_s < 1.58, ns$. Ninety one percent of participants indicated that they wanted to have children, and 2% said they did not want to have children.

There was a marginally significant main effect of prime on portion of time participants wanted to spend child-rearing versus working outside of the home, $F(2, 153) = 2.51, p = .08$. The pattern of means indicates that those who saw the egalitarian prime reported wanting to spend more time working outside the home ($M = 3.57, SD = .17$), compared to those who viewed the traditional ($M = 3.19, SD = .17$) or neutral primes ($M = 3.05, SD = .17$). There was no effect of matched condition, $F(1, 153) = 1.91, ns$, or covariate, $F(1, 153) = 1.52, ns$.

**Correlations**

An overall correlation matrix (Table 3) presents bivariate correlations of independent variables in the study (prime, match), previously collected individual personality measures (HS, BS), and dependent variables measured in the study (website evaluation, labeling sweet, sexist, controlling, and common, cherish, controlling a girlfriend, abuse, and stake).

Pearson’s correlations show that matched status was overall not significantly related to the dependent variables, as shown in the ANOVAs previously conducted ($r < -.12, ns$). Matched status was only significantly related to the website evaluation ($r = -.21, p < .01$), however, because the website evaluation was completed before the matched prime was given, this effect is not meaningful.

Prime was dummy coded into three separate variables for ease of interpretation. As shown in the analyses of variance, the traditional and egalitarian primes elicited differing evaluations of partners. As expected, the traditional prime was associated with less
likelihood to label comments as sexist ($r = -.19, p < .01$), believe their partner would be controlling ($r = -.14, p < .05$) and abusive ($r = -.17, p < .05$), and more likely to feel a higher stake ($r = .15, p < .05$). The egalitarian prime was associated with more labeling as sexist ($r = .22, p < .01$), believing he would be controlling ($r = .15, p < .05$) and abusive ($r = .20, p < .01$), less likely to believe he would cherish ($r = -.14, p < .05$), and feeling less of a stake ($r = -.26, p < .01$). The egalitarian prime was also overall negatively related to the website evaluation ($r = -.25, p < .01$) and to benevolent sexism, such that those who saw the egalitarian prime were lower in endorsement of benevolent sexism ($r = -.23, p < .01$).

The neutral prime was only related to the website evaluation, such that when they saw the neutral website, they evaluated it more positively ($r = .18, p < .05$). (See all correlations in Table 3).

Hostile and benevolent sexism were positively related to each other ($r = .41, p < .01$), as we would expect. Benevolent sexism only related to stake ($r = .27, p < .01$), such that those who highly endorsed benevolent sexism were also more likely to feel a greater stake in the situation. Further, hostile sexism correlated positively with cherish ($r = .19, p < .05$) and stake ($r = .18, p < .05$), and negatively with labeling comments as sexist ($r = -.21, p < .01$). Thus, the more one endorsed hostile sexism, the more at stake they felt in the situation, the more they believed he would cherish a girlfriend, and the less they thought he was sexist.

Further, all of the dependent outcome measures were significantly related to each other. Those who believed their partner was sweet and would cherish were more likely to want to get close to him ($r = .29$ and $.27, p < .01$), and less likely to think he was sexist ($r = -.56, p < .01$), controlling ($r = -.34, p < .01$), or would treat a girlfriend badly ($r = -.38, p < .01$). The reverse pattern was true as well (see Table 3).
Because the patterns of association were quite clear, and because BS and HS did not add much additional information, regression analyses would not explain any more information that what was already found. Therefore, it was not possible to conduct any further mediational analyses, according to the procedure outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986).

Study 2 Discussion

Study 2 tested how ideological and situation stake affect the way participants evaluate a potential romantic partner. Specifically, I believed participants would differentially evaluate a prospective partner based on two manipulated features of the study. First, as in Study 1, participants were primed with either a traditional, egalitarian, or neutral gender role message. Second, half of the participants were exposed to a situation in which they believed they were about to meet a male partner who was highly compatible with her based on personality characteristics. I expected that as there was a heightened ideological and situational stake for participants in this encounter, they would be less likely to notice subtle sexism in their partner’s description.

Only some of the expected hypotheses were met, as outlined below. First, there was a significant effect of prime in this study, such that the traditional prime made participants evaluate their partners more positively, as was expected. In contrast, there was a consistent effect of the egalitarian prime, pushing women to be more likely to notice sexism and potentially controlling and abusive signals. Second, there was no support that matched status led to women differentially evaluating their partners or noticing sexism. Third, there was little support that ideological endorsement HS or BS were related to evaluations. Finally, the new measure of feelings of stake was surprisingly associated with all of the dependent variables.
Effect of Prime

In contrast to Study 1, Study 2 did find significant differences between those who were primed with the traditional, egalitarian, and neutral messages. Originally, I believed that priming traditional roles would be strongly associated with positive evaluations of the partners. While this hypothesis was supported, an even stronger effect was found when participants were primed with the egalitarian message. Most notably, those in the egalitarian condition were most likely to think their partner’s comments were sexist and believe that he might treat a girlfriend negatively. The egalitarian prime also made women less likely to believe he was attractive, sweet, or a caring relationship partner. In contrast, after seeing the traditional gender-role messages, participants were more complacent and tolerant of his ideas about men and women in relationships.

Generally, the effects also show that participants in the traditional condition held relatively similar judgments to those in the neutral conditions (see Table 2). For example, participants were just as likely to believe their partner would cherish his girlfriend if they were in the traditional or neutral condition. There is only a significant difference when egalitarian norms were primed. Does this suggest that women are generally thinking about romantic ideas or relationships? Or, does it suggest that women find these ideas as normative relationship scripts? The answers to these questions can not be discerned by the data collected in this study alone. However, the data suggest that perhaps because relationship norms are so salient in everyday life, more effort needs to be directed to get women to think about themselves as autonomous from men. We do know, according to Rudman and Heppen’s (2003) findings that women implicitly associate ideas about their relationship partners with romanticism (e.g., Prince Charming, superhero), which in turn is associated with lower job and power expectations. In the current study, it seems to be the
case that when women are overtly made to think about career prospects and enhancement (reality vs. fantasy), they are more in tune to subtle status inequalities between men and women, especially in benevolent situations. Women can interpret a more realistic evaluation of benevolent sexism when they are reminded that women hold other roles in society besides bride, wife, mother, or (in fantasy) princess.

Why might the egalitarian website have worked in getting women to notice benevolent sexism? On the www.advancingwomen.com website, participants were led to articles and information that gave young women tips and tactics for navigating their college and post-college job prospects. Often, these articles alluded to examples of actual professional women. Perhaps exposing participants to successful role models is an important step for several reasons (Hansman, 1998; Olson & Ashton-Jones, 1992). First, as suggested above, participants were given concrete examples of women that fulfill other roles in society (e.g., businesswoman, professor) besides the ones frequently stereotyped. Second, exposing young women to successful career role models can also send the message that women are agentic and competent – without the negative underpinnings of sub-type stereotypes (e.g., pushy, aggressive). Thus, this created a safe environment by which women may have been engaged in thinking about their own autonomous goals and aspirations.

Finally, in Study 2, participants were more likely to judge the benevolent profile as controlling when they were first primed with the egalitarian message, but less likely to see it as such after primed with traditional gender roles. This is interesting in that women can be made more or less aware of potentially dangerous situations and relationships. It also suggests that traditional gender norms promote that with protection comes the underlying theme of control. Some women alluded to this point in their open-ended comments, such
as “I wouldn't want to be with someone who is jealous and wouldn't let me do my own thing. Occasionally, I like to spend time with my friends alone and I wouldn't want someone who would constantly be keeping track of me and would get upset if I wasn't with them.” Thus, traditional relationship norms may work to guise control as something beneficial for the subordinate. In contrast, participants who were primed with the egalitarian website were made to think about their own career goals, and could have felt threatened by the idea of a partner controlling resources like money.

Effect of Matched Status

Unfortunately, there were no significant effects of matched status. Participants’ evaluations of their partners did not seem to differentiate by whether they believed their partner was a good romantic match for them or not. One potential confound may have been that the matched manipulation made participants more anxious or awkward about the upcoming interaction. Several participants later made comments such as, “I think some new situations can sometimes make me a little nervous but also anxious at the same time” and “New situations aren't always the best for me, so first impressions aren't always so great with me.” Although anxiety, depression, and hostility was measured in this study (via the MAACL), it was assessed before participants were given the match/no match manipulation. Therefore, we can not know specifically if the manipulation created subsequent anxiety. However, participants did not show similar levels of anxiety going into the manipulation. Further, I expect that if there were differential levels of anxiety created by the matched manipulation, it would have exacerbated the hypothesized between conditions, not cancelled them out

Some participants may also have felt awkward because they mentioned that they already had a boyfriend (n = 13). However, all results were also run with only those who
did not mention that they were in a relationship, and there were no changes in the non-significant effects of matched status\(^6\). Finally, while most participants seemed to believe the manipulation and anticipated the interaction (“Well, see you soon!”), a few participants (n = 3) reported that their experience in the experiment itself was awkward (e.g., “I feel really weird writing this thing”). Yet, there still were no significant effects of match even with these participants filtered out of the analyses.

Related, because of the null results of the matched manipulation, we can also rule several alternative hypotheses. In addition to feeling a higher level of personal involvement, it is possible that the participants may have evaluated their partners more favorably in the matched condition because of heuristic biases in normal decision making. First, it is well-documented that people tend to like others that are similar to them (Houts, Robins, & Houston, 1996; Newcomb, 1961). People also tend to evaluate information related to the self more positively than information that is not related to the self (Dunning, Perie, & Story, 1991). Participants could have merely evaluated their partners favorably because he was believed to be similar and held common personality traits. Second, people place high importance on information that comes from knowledgeable or expert sources (Cialdini, 1993). Because participants were told that their personality characteristics were evaluated by psychology graduate students and professors and then matched to others using valid measures like those from eHarmony, participants may have placed great credibility on this information. According to these reasons, we might expect that those who were matched would evaluate their experimental partners more favorably than those who were not matched just because of mere cognitive biases. However, our null results rule out these competing hypotheses as well.

*Effect of HS and BS*
Endorsement of hostile and benevolent sexism held little association in understanding how participants evaluated their partners. Specifically, greater belief in hostile sexism was associated with less labeling his comments as sexist, and greater belief that he would cherish a relationship partner. Thus, endorsing hostile sexism suggests a belief that it is wrong for women to violate the status hierarchy based on gender (e.g., “women exaggerate problems they have at work” and “women seek to gain power by getting control over men,” Glick & Fiske, 1996). This then allows women to believe that someone benevolently sexist is acting for the good-will of women and not challenging accepted gender-role status quo. Because women high in HS are less likely to judge even overt ideas (e.g., job discrimination) as sexist, which is typically what is thought of as sexism, it makes sense that they would not label these good-natured comments as sexist.

Benevolent sexism did not significantly relate to any other measures except stake, suggesting that those who endorse BS more also felt more at stake in meeting their partner. However, it seems ironic that those who agree more with the ideas of benevolent sexism wouldn’t see their partners as more caring, sweet, or protective.

Consistent with my expectations, the new measure of stake was significantly related to all of the dependent variables in the predicted directions. When participants felt more stake, they were less likely to judge their partner negatively. In contrast, when participants felt less stake, they were more likely to see the partner as sexist, controlling, and abusive. Further, participants felt slightly more of a heightened stake at the traditional website than at the egalitarian website. Although these are correlational data, the effects are in the predicted direction. It is possible that while the manipulations themselves might not have been meaningful in producing group differences, they elicited some amount of feeling invested in the situation (or not), which was picked up on by this measure. Perhaps this
measure holds promise in future attempts at understanding motivational underpinnings of labeling sexism. However, because this was an exploratory first attempt at quantifying “stake,” this should be interpreted with caution.

Taken together the results of Study 2 met some of my predicted effects. There was some evidence that when participants were ideologically less invested in the potential romantic encounter (using the priming technique), they were more likely to see their partner as sexist and controlling. There was not any evidence, however, to support that participants were more situationally invested (via the matched manipulation) in meeting their partner. In Study 2, one problem could have been that the situational manipulation did not come from the source himself. Instead, I tried to induce a sense of personal relevance and stake in meeting the partner indirectly through a bogus research claim. This may also have seemed removed from what would happen in an everyday situation. In a typical social situation, it may seem more likely for a woman to feel a heightened sense of interest if a man shows concern or attraction to her directly. For example, if a man compliments a woman, she may be flattered and approach the interaction with him favorably. A compliment might soften the interaction and she probably would not be alerted to look for sexism or discrimination in the encounter. I use this as an experimental paradigm included in Study 3 to further test the idea of situational stake.
Overview

Up to the present study, there was no explicit support found that situational variables could heighten the stake in interactions. Study 3 tries another manipulation of stake, using a similar design to Study 2, thought to predict whether women label sexism in a benevolent partner. In Study 3 there is no manipulation of gender-role messages, in order to simplify the interpretation of the situation manipulations.

Instead, I concentrate on another situational manipulation in which participants may feel a higher stake in meeting and evaluating a target male. Several past studies have found that people form more positive evaluations of others when they believe they are liked by them (Backman & Secord, 1959; Curtis & Miller, 1986; DeBono & Krim, 1997). In this case, in addition to believing there is a matched (or non-matched) experimental partner, this partner will either deliver a compliment or not compliment each participant. Half of the participants will be led to believe that their partner thinks that she “sounds great in her description” and he “can’t wait to meet her!”

The design for Study 3 was a 2 (matched vs. non-matched) x 2 (compliment vs. no compliment) paradigm. Study 3 tests the same dependent variables as in the previous study (i.e., general attitudes toward partner, desire to get close, IOS, feeling thermometer, labeling comments, and relationship quality).

The following are proposed hypotheses for Study 3:

Hypothesis A. I continue to expect that women who are led to believe they are matched to their experimental partners will be less likely to label his comments as sexist, controlling, and abusive, and more likely to think he is sweet, will cherish a
relationship partner, and have a desire to interact more closely with him than women who are not in the matched condition.

_Hypothesis B._ Further, I hypothesize that when given an additional situational manipulation – in the form of a compliment – women will be less likely to label their partner as sexist than women who are not given a compliment. Women in this condition should also be more likely to want to be close, think he will provide a better relationship quality, and think he is controlling than women in the “no compliment” condition.

_Hypothesis C._ An interaction between matched status and compliment condition is expected, such that those with in the matched and complimented condition should be more unaware of their partner’s sexism, and those in the non-matched and non-complimented conditions should be most able to recognize their partner’s sexism.

_Hypothesis D._ As in the previous two studies, it is expected that women who are already high in endorsement of BS and HS (ideological stake) will be least likely to label sexism than those who are low in BS and HS. I predict that HS and BS will be positively related to labeling comments as sweet, desire to get close to partner, and positive evaluations as a relationship partner.

_Hypothesis E._ Stake should also be significantly related to the independent and dependent variables, such that the matched and complimented people should feel a greater sense of stake in the situation than those who are not matched or
complimented. Further, those who feel more of a stake should in turn be less likely to label sexism from their partners, and most likely to evaluate him positively. Contingent on these hypotheses, I will again look into whether stake may be a significant mediator between the independent variables and the outcome measures.

**Method**

**Participants**

One hundred twenty women signed up to participate in this study in exchange for one experimental course credit in Introductory Psychology. Students who participated in Studies 1 or 2 were not allowed to participate in Study 3. Participants were predominantly White (83%) and ranged in age from 18 to 26 ($M = 18.9$, $SD = 1.19$). One hundred eighteen indicated that they were heterosexual, one student indicated that she was lesbian, and one was not sure of her sexual orientation.

**Measures**

Participants again read the self-description ostensibly written by her experimental male partner. This description is the exact one used in Study 2 and is always benevolent in nature (see Appendix B for full description).

Study 3 uses the exact same measures as in Study 2. The dependent measures are: general attitudes toward experimental partner, labeling his comments as sweet, sexist, controlling, or common, desire to get closer, qualities as a relationship partner, feelings of personal stake, wanting partner’s phone number or email, and questions about future goals. These dependent variables were assessed as a function of the two main independent variables – matched status and a new manipulation, complement vs. no complement. Additionally, hostile and benevolent sexism scores were obtained prior to data collection, and were used as ideological predictors of the dependent variables.
Procedure

In Study 3, participants do not complete the web-browsing procedure as they did in Study 2, because I was concerned in this study with the unique effects of the situational manipulations. Therefore, when participants arrived at the study, they were greeted by a female experimenter and ushered to a computer cubicle wherein the experimenter explained that she would soon be meeting and interacting with another male student who was also here for the study. The experimenter explained that before they met, the participant would first complete some survey-type questions on the computer. These included the MAACL and questions about social anxiety in new situations and meeting new people. Immediately after these questions, they same cover story was used as in Study 2 about the interest and evaluation of dating websites. Participants were then randomly assigned to the matched or not matched conditions, where half of the participants were led to believe that their experimental partner was selected as a good romantic match for her. Next, participants were told that before they actually meet, they would have the opportunity to write a little bit about themselves and read each other’s self-descriptions. The instructions asked participants to write about themselves, possibly including their hobbies, interests, and what they would look for in a relationship partner. The computer directions read that once they finished writing and clicked “continue,” their responses would be automatically sent to a printer in a nearby room where the other student was sitting. Participants were also instructed to let the experimenter know when they were done writing.

At this point in the experiment, the participant was always made to finish her self-description first. When the participant told the experimenter that she was done writing, the experimenter would respond, “Ok, let me check if your partner’s description has printed
The experimenter said, “While I was fixing a glitch on your partner’s computer, he started reading your description and said you sound like you are great! He can’t wait to meet you!” In the non-compliment condition, the experimenter handed her the description and said, “Here is your partner’s description.” Participants were then instructed that they should read over his paragraph and complete some questions about their initial impressions toward him, before they are brought to meet. The participants then completed the rest of the dependent measures. Once they were done, the computer prompted the participant to let the experimenter know they were done with that portion of the study. At this point, the rest of the procedure followed exactly from Study 2, where the participant was made aware that the experiment had ended and she was fully debriefed and had time to address questions and comments.

Results

A series of 2 (matched, not matched) x 2 (compliment, no compliment) ANCOVAs were run to evaluate whether a heightened situational stake effects each of the following: attitudes toward partner, labeling his description, desire for closeness, relationship quality, feelings of stake, and desire for future contact. Feelings of anxiety (assessed by the MAACL; $M = 3.71$) acted as a covariate in all analyses.

Affect

Although the MAACL was distributed before any of the situational manipulations (matched, compliment) were made, I assessed whether each of the groups differed on the sections of the MAACL going into the study. Because Study 2 found that some
participants felt uneasy or uncomfortable with the thought of meeting a person that was supposedly matched for them, the MAACL was used to assess how participants were feeling at the start of the study, in order to later be used as a covariate. There was a significant difference on anxiety between people who were to be in the matched condition, according to an ANOVA, $F(1, 119) = 5.86, p < .02$. Those who were to be in the matched condition reported slightly higher levels of anxiety ($M = 2.36, SD = .71$) than those who were not going to be matched ($M = 2.04, SD = .71$). There were no other differences on reports of depression or hostility, or on the measure assessing social anxiety in meeting new people. The anxiety sub-scale was subsequently used as a covariate on all further analyses.

**Analysis of Variance**

*General Feeling toward Partner.* When entered into an ANCOVA, neither match, $F(1, 115) = .20, ns$, or compliment status, $F(1, 115) = .08, ns$, had a significant effect on participants’ overall evaluations of their partner. All participants generally thought highly of their partners, as the overall mean is on the higher end of the 7-point scale ($M = 5.52, SD = .08$). The covariate did not have a significant effect either, $F(1, 115) = .89, ns$.

A 2 (matched) x 2 (compliment) ANCOVA was conducted on the feeling thermometer measure. There were no reliable effects of matched status, $F(1, 114) = .72, ns$, or compliment, $F(1, 114) = .12, ns$. The covariate was also not significant, $F(1, 114) = .53, ns$.

*Inclusion of Other in Self.* ANCOVA results reveal that there was no significant effect of match, $F(1, 115) = .47, ns$. There was a marginal effect of compliment, $F(1, 115) = 2.99, p = .08$. The pattern of means suggests that those who were given a compliment felt closest to their partners ($M = 3.54, SD = .14$) than those who were not complimented.
$(M = 3.19, SD = .14)$. There was no significant effect of the covariate, $F(1, 115) = 2.81, \text{ ns}$.

**Desire to be Close.** An ANCOVA was conducted on the variable assessing whether participants would want become closer with their partners. There were no significant effects of match, $F(1, 115) = .16, \text{ ns}$, or compliment, $F(1, 115) = 2.44, \text{ ns}$. Participants generally wanted to be close to their partners, $M = 4.80, SD = .12$. There was no effect of covariate either, $F(1, 115) = 2.54, \text{ ns}$.

**Labeling Comments.** A $2 \times 2$ ANCOVA test revealed that neither match, $F(1, 115) = .91, \text{ ns}$, or compliment, $F(1, 115) = .12, \text{ ns}$, had a differential effect on labeling their partner’s description as sweet. Participants were just as likely to rate their partners as highly sweet ($M = 5.32, SD = .09$), regardless of condition. There was also no effect of the covariate, $F(1, 115) = .72, \text{ ns}$.

According to my hypotheses, I expected to find that women who experienced the highest situational stake (matched and complimented) should be less likely to notice sexism and women who had the least situational stake (not matched and not complimented) should be most likely to notice sexism. Unfortunately, there were no effects found on labeling his comments as sexist for matched status, $F(1, 115) = .16, \text{ ns}$, or compliment, $F(1, 115) = 1.56, \text{ ns}$. Participants generally did not perceive his profile as very sexist ($M = 2.14, SD = .09$). The covariate was not significant, $F(1, 115) = .00, \text{ ns}$.

Further, there were no between-group differences in labeling the comments as controlling. There was not a significant effect of match, $F(1, 115) = .42, \text{ ns}$, or compliment, $F(1, 115) = 1.95, \text{ ns}$. Generally, participants felt relatively neutral about whether his comments could be interpreted as controlling ($M = 3.48, SD = .14$). The covariate was not significant either, $F(1, 115) = 1.73, \text{ ns}$.
Finally, there were no differences in labeling comments as common and ordinary ($M = 3.32, SD = .11$). Neither matched status, $F(1, 115) = 2.29, ns$, compliment, $F(1, 115) = .41, ns$, or the covariate, $F(1, 115) = .10, ns$, were significant.

**Relationship Quality.** A series of ANCOVA analyses showed that there no significant differences based on condition in rating potential relationship partners. First, there was not an effect of match, $F(1, 115) = .00, ns$, or compliment, $F(1, 115) = .04, ns$, in believing he would cherish a girlfriend. All participants were highly likely to agree that he would cherish a potential girlfriend ($M = 5.99, SD = .09$). There was no effect of the covariate, $F(1, 115) = .19, ns$.

Second, there were no differences in believing partners would be controlling toward a girlfriend based on match, $F(1, 115) = 2.75, ns$, or compliment, $F(1, 115) = 1.23, ns$. Participants were relatively neutral about whether he would control a girlfriend ($M = 3.77, SD = .14$). There was a significant effect of the covariate, $F(1, 115) = 7.19, p < .01$, such that those who were low in anxiety were more likely to believe he would be controlling.

Third, the match x compliment ANCOVA determined that there were no statistically significant effects of either match, $F(1, 115) = 2.15, ns$, or compliment, $F(1, 115) = .46, ns$, on participant’s belief that their partner would be abusive toward a potential girlfriend. Participants overall disagreed with this sentiment ($M = 3.22, SD = .12$). There was again a significant effect of the covariate, $F(1, 115) = 5.22, p < .02$, such that those low in anxiety were more likely to believe he would be abusive.

**Stake in Relationship.** Finally, there were no significant differences on whether participants felt varying degrees of stake as a result of the situational manipulations. Both match, $F(1, 115) = .82, ns$, and compliment, $F(1, 115) = .34, ns$, were non-significant. All
participants felt relatively neutral about having something at stake in meeting their partner \((M = 4.15, SD = .08)\). There was no effect of the covariate, \(F(1, 115) = .19, ns\).

**Further Contact.** According to logistic regression analyses, neither match nor compliment made significant differences in whether participants wanted their partner’s email address or phone number for future contact. The overall models predicting wanting email address and phone number were not significant, \(\chi^2 = .04\) and \(.17, ns\), respectively.

**Future Plans.** A series of ANCOVA analyses were run assessing participants’ estimated income, desire to have children, and portion of time spent on childcare versus outside work. First, there were no significant effects of match, \(F(1, 83) = .37, ns\), or compliment, \(F(1, 83) = .44, ns\). Participants, on average, believed they would earn approximately $80-90,000 per year. However, the covariate, anxiety, was significant, \(F(1, 83) = 6.98, p < .01\), in that they more anxious they felt, the more amount of income participants expected.

There were no between groups differences on the participants wanting to have children or not. Neither matched status, \(F(1, 115) = .50, ns\), nor compliment, \(F(1, 115) = 1.51, ns\), had an effect of wanting to have children. Eighty-eight percent said that they wanted children, and only 1% did not. Further, there were no effects of match, \(F(1, 115) = 2.53, ns\), or compliment, \(F(1, 115) = 1.76, ns\), on the portion of time participants wanted to spend on care-giving or working outside the house. Participants report that they plan to spend approximately half of their time on each. The covariate was not significant, \(F(1, 115) = .35, ns\).

**Correlations**

Prior to running Study 3, participant’s beliefs about hostile and benevolent sexism were collected. To get an idea of how these ideological factors related to some of the
variables in the study, Pearson’s correlations were conducted, using the following variables: match, compliment, anxiety, BS, HS, sweet, sexist, label controlling, common, cherish, control girlfriend, abuse, and stake (see Table 4).

It was clear that match and compliment status did not have any impact on the dependent variables. Neither were significantly related to any of the dependent variables in the correlation matrix. Hostile and benevolent sexism scores were positively related to each other ($r = .45, p < .01$), such that those likely to endorse hostile sexism also endorse benevolent sexism. Otherwise, hostile sexism was only related to stake, such that those higher in endorsement of HS felt more of a stake ($r = .27, p < .05$). Benevolent sexism was negatively related to labeling comments as sexist ($r = -.30, p < .05$), labeling comments as controlling ($r = -.32, p < .01$), and being abusive toward a girlfriend ($r = -.27, p < .01$), and only positively related to cherish ($r = .29, p < .05$). This suggests that the less one believes in benevolent sexism, the more likely they are to detect sexism and negative treatment toward a girlfriend.\(^7\)

As expected, the dependent variables (labeling, relationship quality) were highly correlated with each other, such that the more one labeled comments as sweet, the more they thought the partner would be a good relationship partner ($r = .64, p < .01$) and the less sexist ($r = -.46, p < .01$) and controlling ($r = -.26, p < .01$) they perceived him. The reverse was also true, such that the more one labeled him as sexist, the more controlling ($r = .60, p < .01$) and less caring of a partner they thought he would be ($r = -.67, p < .01$).

Feelings of stake was again related to all of the dependent variables. Stake was positively related to hostile sexism ($r = .27, p < .05$), liking partner ($r = .62, p < .01$), sweet ($r = .59, p < .01$), and cherish ($r = .55, p < .01$), such that the more one felt a stake in their partner, the more they liked him and rated him as sweet and likely to cherish. On the
contrary, stake was negatively related to sexist ($r = -.43, p < .01$), label controlling ($r = -.42, p < .01$), common ($r = -.28, p < .01$), and likely to control ($r = -.45, p < .01$) and abuse a girlfriend ($r = -.50, p < .01$). The more they labeled him as sexist, controlling, common, and likely to abuse a girlfriend, the less they felt a personal stake. (See Table 4 for all correlations).

**Discussion**

Study 3 predicted that women would be less likely to detect sexism when in situations of heightened situational stake, such as being paired as a good romantic match or receiving a compliment. Unfortunately, none of the desired effects were found in Study 3. The results showed that neither manipulation of situational stake had an effect on participants’ ability to detect sexism or controlling behavior in their partner, or in evaluating him as a favorable relationship partner. As in Study 1, without any manipulation of gender roles, participants were very likely to see the benevolent partner as a sweet and caring person (and relationship partner).

Although the independent variables did not elicit the desired effect on the partner evaluations, stake was once again an important correlate with all of the dependent variables. As predicted, those who felt more of a stake in the situation evaluated their partner more favorably and were less likely to see him as sexist. However, stake was not associated with either of the independent variables. The data suggest that stake acts as another dependent variable, and a possible product of feeling positive toward their partner. It is not clear whether stake could play a causal role in predicting the other dependent variables. This question cannot be answered in this study because of the correlational nature of the data, yet a further discussion will be resumed in the next chapter.
There was also a significant effect of anxiety as a covariate on several analyses. Specifically, anxiety was significantly related to rating one’s partner as a potentially controlling and abusive boyfriend. Both effects revealed that those lower in anxiety were more likely to label him as someone who might treat a girlfriend in a controlling or abusive way. This suggests that those who were feeling more anxiety in the situation were not as likely to see him as a potential threat. This effect is important because in real situations, a woman might be more focused on her mood, which in turn could mask her ability to see dangerous warning signals.

Additionally, the relationship between BS and HS and the dependent measures were evaluated. Participants who were high in endorsing BS were more likely to evaluate their partner favorably, and less likely to believe he was sexist, controlling, or abusive. HS was only related to stake, such that those high in HS felt more at stake in the situation. Overall, Study 3 held little support that participants were ideologically or situationally invested.
Chapter 10: General Discussion

“I am a romantic, so I would like someone who will take the time to court me, and... make me feel special when we are together” (quote from participant in Study 2, traditional prime).

In the present research, I explored factors that relate to women recognizing benevolent sexism. I considered whether women’s ideological beliefs in ambivalent sexism, exposure to traditional and egalitarian gender roles, and heightened situational variables would be important factors in evaluating benevolent sexism. In large part, women did not recognize instances of benevolent ideologies as sexist. Participants positively favored the benevolent profile as someone whose comments were sweet and would make a caring relationship partner. According to the means of the dependent variables, positive evaluations of the target (sweet, cherish) were well-above the midpoint of the scale, and negative evaluations (sexist, negative relationship partner) were clearly below the midpoint. This suggests that young women are typically fine with benevolent sexism and do not, at least on the surface, appear to be suspicious of the underlying paternalistic quality. Consistent with Kiliasinski and Rudman’s (1998) analysis, women appear to approve of benevolent sexism because they are getting something positive out of the interchange, such as attention, protection, and chivalry.

However, according to Study 2’s results, women were increasingly able to notice and label benevolent comments as sexist when they were primed with egalitarian gender roles. This effect complements and expands on the work of Rudman and Heppen (2003) and Jost and Kay (2005). In the previous studies, young women were found to comply more with the system of gender-based hierarchy after they were made to think about traditional gender roles. The current research suggests an antidote, given that when women are made to think about moving up in status in non-traditional roles (e.g., business) and
being self-reliant, they subsequently are less tolerant of chivalry and control by a man.

Viki, Abrams, & Hutchison (2003) note that endorsing traditional gender hierarchy “may
be a barrier to gender equality because it may discourage women from seeking their own
personal success by encouraging them to seek success through a benevolent male partner”
(p. 536). This research suggests that when women do envision their own success, they may
feel stifled by the protective comments of a benevolent partner, and thus are more able to
identify people and relationships that limit one’s advancement.

Study 2 also found that evaluations from participants who were in the traditional
gender role condition or the neutral conditions were fairly similar to each other compared
to the egalitarian condition (see Table 2). This pattern suggests that priming traditional
gender role concepts may not be far from what women are already thinking about, or are
socialized to think about. Heterosexual women seem to mistake benevolent sexism for
flattery, attention, and chivalry, which act as positive commodities in the interdependent
exchange with men. In this context, these results imply that it is normative for heterosexual
women to ignore the consequences of benevolent sexism, because it fits the traditional
heteronormative relationship script. Because the script is ritualized and normalized,
women might be cautious of interactions and relationships that do not conform. For
example, if in the early stages of a relationship, a male partner treated the female partner as
holding completely equal and non-gendered responsibilities (e.g., waiting for her to pay
half the bill, asking her to pick him up for a date, passively declining physical contact), the
unsuspecting female partner might feel awkward, suspicious, or even angry. Recent social
commentary observes that women like when men pay and hold doors open for them, as it
keeps social interactions running smoothly and reaffirms their role in the script (Dowd,
2005). Dowd (2005) notes that, on a date, the young woman of today “expects him to pay,
both to prove her desirability and as a way of signaling romance” (p. 53). Thus, heterosexual women not only enjoy the advantages of benevolent sexism, but use it as a standard of relationship commitment.

Another possible reason why women do not label benevolent sexism, besides sacrificing the potential rewards from a male partner, is because noticing sexism can bring about further internal conflict, such as deciding whether to take action against it or not. If one does decide to bring awareness to others, she may also worry about being cast as angry, a feminist, or a troublemaker (Kaiser & Miller, 2003; Marin & Guadagno, 1999). More research is needed to ascertain which – the positive rewards or negative backlash – specifically leads to women minimize the existence of benevolent sexism.

Further, in these studies, priming of gender role ideologies rendered more significant associations with recognizing hostile and benevolent sexism than did instances of situational stake. There was no empirical support for the manipulations of situational stake in leading to more awareness and labeling of sexism. These findings may suggest that the ideologies we hold and value are more likely to guide our responses in situations and relationships than situational factors, per se (Deaux & Major, 1987).

Limitations

Looking back, this research leaves several concerns about the interpretations made. First, there are methodological questions left unanswered, such as why there was a difference between the prime manipulation working in Study 2 but not Study 1, or what could account for the null effects of the Study 3 manipulations. Further, there are broader, theoretical questions about the meaning of feeling stake in a situation. I will address these concerns below.
The first concern to address is why there was an effect of the prime manipulation in Study 2, but not in Study 1. In Study 2, there was support found for increasing women’s awareness of sexism by using an egalitarian gender role prime; however, this finding was not supported in Study 1. What could have accounted for the difference in evaluating the benevolent comments differently in the two studies? As discussed earlier, one possible reason is that the participants in Study 1 evaluated abstract profiles of a target male student, while participants in Study 2 evaluated someone that they believed they were actually going to meet. The difference in procedure may lend some credibility to the idea that being more invested in the situation may guide women to evaluate information differently. However, the findings go in the opposite direction of what I would expect. Because participants may have had more at stake in Study 2, I would expect less awareness of sexism here than in Study 1, where there was nothing to gain or lose in their evaluations. Replication of one or both studies could be necessary to ascertain whether prime really has an effect.

A broader question raised in an earlier discussion still looms over the conclusions drawn about the messages elicited from the website prime. What was exactly being primed by the websites? Does theknot.com elicit messages specifically about a wedding, a romanticized relationship script, or more abstractly about traditional gender roles? Further, does advancingwomen.com push women to think about their own careers specifically or more egalitarian gender roles in general? More pilot testing of the websites is necessary to determine the answers to these questions, which is lacking from the current investigation. I suspect that although theknot.com may not immediately foster ideas about gender roles, traditional gender role concepts are cognitively associated with romantic ideals such as fantasy proposals and fairy-tale weddings. Glick, Diebold, Bailey-Warner, & Zhu (1997)
suggest that people who endorse benevolent sexism also endorse more traditional gender roles. Research has also shown that benevolent sexism predicts paternalistic chivalry, which suggests gender-appropriate behaviors during courtship (Viki et al., 2003). Further testing would be necessary to determine whether benevolent sexism, chivalry, romantic fantasies, and endorsement of the ideas elicited on the websites are related.

Another limitation was that neither the manipulation of situational variables - matched status or compliment – worked in producing reliable differences in detection of sexism or evaluation of partners (Studies 2 and 3). Participants did not notice sexism less or evaluate their partners more favorably when they had been matched or complimented. However, Study 3 uncovered that anxiety was sometimes related to participants’ evaluation of their partner as a controlling or abusive boyfriend. With regard to these measures, the experimental design may have created a sense of anxiety that hindered participants from noticing subtle aspects of power in the situation. A similar study conducted by Chaudoir (2005) found that participants were more likely to notice sexism from a target when they did not expect to meet him than when they were anticipating an interaction. Likewise, the anxiety and unfamiliar nature of the study may foster more attention paid to aspects of the situation than on detecting subtle sexism. Perhaps manipulating anxiety-producing or lessening conditions would further support the idea that when people are under cognitive stress, they are less likely to evaluate subtle forms of sexism or discrimination. Likewise, other situational manipulations, such as varying the attractiveness or status of the partner, may have fared better in creating a sense of desire to interact in the situation rather than being “matched.”

Another question was raised in Study 3’s discussion as to the nature of the variable “stake.” Given the data, it is hard to tell whether stake is more of a situational variable or
a potential problem might be in the connection between how stake was originally conceived and how it was measured. Stake was originally thought to be both an ideological commitment and a situational investment that would affect a participant’s negotiation of a situation. In addition to the manipulated features of the study, I primarily evaluated feelings of stake in a scale as a dependent measure. However, the items on the scale were more focused on aspects of situational stake, and referred to feelings of investment or personal relevance in the upcoming interaction (see Appendix E). From the data, it seems that stake was more related to ideology than to situational variables. Stake was not at all related to match or compliment in either Study 2 or 3. However, stake was related to BS, HS, and evaluations of the partners.

However, stake was also related to all of the dependent variables in Studies 2 and 3, such that higher stake was associated with favorable evaluations and less detection of sexism. Yet, what does this variable really mean? Is it a useful new way of explaining a motivation to discount sexism? Or, is stake just another way of expressing agreement with benevolent ideologies? Because the variables in question were never all significantly related to each other in the same study, it was not possible to conduct further mediational analyses to determine whether stake held unique predictive validity over and above the manipulated variables. Perhaps a future study could use structural equation modeling to determine whether stake is more of a cause or an effect of ideologies such as hostile and benevolent sexism, system justification, or social dominance. Or, a better designed experimental study could test the effect of proximal situational cues of feelings of stake. More thoughts on this are given at the end of this section.

Finally, in the studies, women evaluate a target that they do not know, but who is similar to them in certain respects (age, college, personality in some cases). I decided not
to evaluate women’s actual current relationship partners for two reasons. First, women may not as readily believe experimental manipulations of their partner’s comments as much as they would a stranger’s. Second, for the purposes of this research, I am interested in the dynamics that happen in the highly emotional time before a couple commits to each other. In the beginning stages of a courtship, both individuals are likely to see each other through rose-colored glasses and defenses are weakened (Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996; Murray & Holmes, 1997). Initial impressions may be distorted, and I believe that this is a critical time in which women may tolerate and accept instances of sexism. However, several participants found the experimental design to be awkward or implied that they already had a boyfriend. Although analyses were done without these participants and did not change the results, it still may be a source of unaccounted error. Perhaps a future study could modify this design to work with real couples, have participants meet their experimental partner before evaluating him, or induce closeness using a procedure similar to Ropp’s (2004) design. These factors may better capture a sense of situational stake.

Considering there were a number of methodological concerns looking back on this set of studies, it may seem surprising that the predictions for each study were not changed because of the null results of the prior study. In Study 1, there was a predicted effect of prime, which was not found – but challenged again in Study 2. Next, in Study 2, there were no effects of matched status, but again used in Study 3. This was done because I believed these phenomena do exist, although may not have been captured because of methodological flaws in the studies. Overall, I attempted to operationalize variables that would find variance in women noticing and labeling benevolent sexism. However, the pattern of results show that using positively-valenced situational primes, on an already benevolent partner, would only continue to reinforce that this person was wonderful. That
is, the benevolent partner made romantic comments about an ideal relationship, shared similar personality traits, and (especially) was overjoyed to meet the participant! This is a recipe for attraction, and it is no wonder that there was not much variance in seeing him as potentially sexist or controlling. Considering the effects of Study 2, perhaps more of a neutral or negatively-valenced situational prime would have created more range in how the participants evaluated their partners. For example, a study by Crocker, Cornwell, & Major (1993) used a procedure in which an “attractive” male gave feedback to a participant after reading a description about her. In some conditions, participants were given negative feedback, such that the attractive male was not interested in meeting her. If the current participants had been given additional information along these lines, perhaps they would have evaluated their partners differently. In this context, it would be interesting to see whether participants’ feelings of stake vary before and after the negative feedback, along with her evaluations of him as sexist or not, compared to a control condition. Taken together, it may be that as long as a male partner is seen as benevolent, romantic, and good-natured, women will not be likely to notice covert types of sexism.

Implications and Future Directions

Women as a Group: From Stigma to Empowerment

One positive finding from this research is that women can be made more aware of subtle sexism through a short manipulation of reminding them that women can hold strong and powerful roles in society (Study 2). This is an empowering effect that provides an antidote to much of the research geared toward what holds women back from advancing. Much previous research has shown that by reminding women of their status, their bodies, or traditional gender roles, women under-perform in domains that are typically associated with men (Fredrickson, Roberts, Noll, Quinn, & Twenge, 1998; Spencer, Steele, & Quinn,
Most notably, research on stereotype threat finds that women under-perform in male-stereotyped domains when given very subtle reminders of a stereotype. Spencer, Steele, and Quinn (1999) found that even when women were told that a math test is “gender fair,” they were reminded of the stereotype that women are bad at math, and subsequently performed worse on a math task than when they were provided no information at all. Thus, without knowing it, culturally shared associations perpetuate the traditional status quo.

This research holds hope for the opposite effect. By reminding women of counter-stereotypical information about women’s abilities in male-defined domains, women may have a larger set of models and options. Although this research found that women were more likely to perceive subtle discrimination, perhaps women might also perform better than when they are reminded about gender counter-stereotypical information. A future research direction might explore the effects of egalitarian versus traditional gender role messages on actual achievement, as well as preferences for higher status advancement.

Power in Close Relationships

This research is one of few studies to empirically merge the connection between sexism and close relationships. By looking at how sexism functions in close relationships, we can better understand the unique ways in which power inequality works both in and outside the home. One specific area where this research might have usefulness is in understanding more about the nature of abusive relationships. Particularly, this research may be extended to understand the conditions under which abuse, power, and control in relationships first starts, is legitimized, and later noticed and labeled as such.

Research has recently begun to look at the usefulness of ambivalent sexism in understanding more about the abuse of power and control in intimate relationships.
Along with understanding how ideology plays a part (which I explain below), the application of ambivalent sexism theory can be extremely useful in understanding the context of abusive relationships. Largely, abusive relationships function by legitimizing hostile ideas and actions with more romantic, benevolent ones.

A good deal of research supports that men who espouse rigid and traditional gender roles can have significant proclivity to abuse power in intimate relationships (Briere, 1987; Connors & Harway, 1995; O’Neil & Harway, 1997). For example, Haj-Yahia (1997) found that the more men endorsed traditionally masculine sex roles and negative attitudes toward women, the more they believed that “a woman could benefit from a beating” (p. 540). Abusive men typically believe in the complementary gender role stereotypes that Glick and Fiske (1996; 2001) outline, especially that men should provide and protect women and that “women are not complete without a relationship with a man” (Wilson, 1997, p. 28). O’Neil and Harway (1997) argue that adherence to masculine gender role norms and fear of femininity support men’s violence toward women. Recently, Glick, Sakalli-Ugurlu, Ferreira, and de Souza (2002) found that both hostile and benevolent sexism are associated with attitudes toward domestic abuse in Turkey and Brazil, two countries that generally are more patriarchal in structure than the United States (Glick et al., 2000). However, they found that only hostile sexism, but not benevolent sexism, significantly predicted both men’s and women’s attitudes toward legitimate wife abuse (e.g., “a husband has the right to beat his wife if she does not respect his parents or siblings”) (Glick et al., 2002; Haj-Yahia, 1998). Sakalli (2001) corroborated this finding, arguing that hostile sexism is the ideology that reflects antipathy and mistrust of women, while benevolent sexism, although related to these ideas, more specifically reflects ideas about the pure, sensitive, and moral side of women.
In terms of ambivalent sexism, Glick et al. (2002) describe benevolent sexism as “representing the ‘carrot’ women are offered for complying to traditional roles and HS [hostile sexism] the ‘stick’ that threatens women with punishment should they not defer to men” (p. 292).

While ambivalent sexism is clearly a characteristic of perpetrators of abuse, even more interesting is the connection between victims’ endorsement of traditional gender roles in justifying abuse. Recent research has shown that endorsing traditional gender roles has an impact in women being more tolerant of sexual harassment (Russell & Trigg, 2004), stranger and acquaintance rape (Abrams, Viki, Masser, & Bohner, 2003), and personally reporting less intimate partner victimization (Fitzpatrick, Salgado, Suvak, King, & King, 2004). The current research also suggests that buying into benevolent sexism has important consequences for being perceptive to a potentially controlling relationship partner (Study 1). These are important findings to address, since ideology not only plays a part in legitimizing systems of unequal power (Jost & Kay, 2005), but also legitimizes personal accounts of victimization and violence. Endorsement of ideologies such as benevolent sexism, paternalistic chivalry, and romantic fantasies may hinder the detection of power imbalances. Because high endorsers legitimize relationships with unequal power, according to traditional relationship scripts, they may delay recognizing patterns of abuse and control, thereby leading them to take longer to get out of potentially abusive relationships.

One applied direction for future research might be to work with self-identified victims of domestic abuse, and assess the degree to which victims endorse ideologies of hostile and benevolent sexism, system justification, romantic fantasies, paternalistic chivalry, and social dominance. Perhaps greater ideological investment is associated
with decreased likelihood to notice subtle forms of sexism and patterns of control and dominance. A study might also consider the degree to which ideologies play a role in a victim’s decision to leave her abusive relationship and the amount of time she stays connected to the abuser. Perhaps, also integrating self-empowerment strategies, such as those from the egalitarian primes, might foster greater proclivity to stay out of the abusive environment.

**Conclusions**

The immediate rewards of benevolent sexism may not outweigh the costs of not recognizing it. Although this system of complementary status might be justified in close relationships, these same vices are used against women outside the relationship as well. Benokraitis and Feagin (1986) argue that flirtation, flattery, chivalry, and seduction are routinely used against women in the workplace as “a means of excluding her from the group” (referring to the male work-group, p. 33). This type of flattering attention wears down a woman’s defenses and makes it harder for her to see the imbalance in social structure. If a woman has associated positive outcomes with this behavior from her personal relationship experience, she may not expect it to lead to mistreatment in other domains. Benokraitis and Feagin (1986) warn that it is important to understand the often invisible nature of subtle and covert sexism and how it operates on multiple levels of our social structure.

This research hopefully extends an understanding of how sexism, especially benevolent sexism, continues to function in our society, and how psychology can provide a tool to promote greater understanding and awareness. By understanding how culturally-shared ideologies work to disadvantage women, along with experimenting with ways we
can move against these forces to empower women, hopefully we as a society can make
greater strides toward gender equality.
References


Pratto, F., & Walker, A. (2001). Power, beneficence, and exploitation in personal relationships. In A. Y. Lee-Chai and J. A. Bargh (Eds.), *The use and abuse of*
power: Multiple perspectives on the causes of corruption (pp. 93-114).


Appendix A.

Hostile and Benevolent Profiles of Target Male used in Study 1.

**Age:** 20

**Height:** 6'1"

**Body Type:** I work out so I’d say athletic and strong build….i’m especially proud of my arms…

**Year in School:** junior

**Current Job:** student – majoring in bio and minoring in business

**Future Goals:** I hope to be applying to medical schools soon. I want to be a surgeon.

**For Fun:** The usual…hanging out with friends, movies, music.

**Staying Fit:** besides just working out, I like to mountain bike, snowboard, rock climbing.

---

**Hostile Profile:**

**Ideal Relationship:** Of course, looks are a big factor. I want a girl who looks good in a pair of jeans and knows which remote control to use. Not a girl who’s going to take things for granted and expects me to just by her things. Chicks are more interested in being taken out and getting things than anything else. I want a girl who likes to have fun, hook up, and isn’t going to be trying to put me on a leash.

**Last Relationship Experience:** I’ve been with lots of girls who just try to get what they can from a guy. They want things just handed to them without giving me anything in return, if you know what I mean. My girl needs to respect me.

**Personal Motto:** Those who don’t try don’t deserve.

---

**Benevolent Profile:**

**Ideal Relationship:** I see the girl of my dreams as being sensitive, a good listener…my best friend. Of course, looks are a big factor too. I think of myself being a romantic kind of guy though. If I met the girl of my dreams, I would treat her like a queen. I believe that women should be protected, so I’d provide that for her. My girl would deserve the best. I’d plan our life so that she wouldn’t have to worry about anything, like money or bills.

**Last Relationship Experience:** I’ve been with some girls who weren’t serious about being in a relationship. I want a girl who could complete me…someone who is ready to be adored and cherished.

**Personal Motto:** Behind every successful man is a strong woman.
Appendix B.

Benevolent Self-Description of the Experimental Partner used in Studies 2 and 3.

I’m 20 years old, about 6’1”. I work out so I’d say athletic and strong build…i’m especially proud of my arms… I’m taking some psych classes now but I want to go to medical school. I want to be a cardiologist. I guess for fun I just do the usual…hang out with friends, movies, music, mountain bike, snowboard, rock climbing.

They told me to write about my ideal relationship, so I guess I’ll talk about that. I see the girl of my dreams as being sensitive, a good listener…my best friend. Of course, looks are a big factor too. I think of myself being a romantic though. If I met the girl of my dreams, I would treat her like a queen. I believe that women should be protected, so I’d provide that for her. My girl would deserve the best. I’d plan our life so that she wouldn’t have to worry about anything, like money or bills. I want a girl who is ready to be adored and cherished.
Appendix C.

Questionnaire on Desire to Get Closer to Partner

How much would you consider each of the following with your partner:

- **Emailing back and forth:**
  - 1---2---3---4---5---6---7
  - Not at all                      Very Much

- **Phone conversation:**
  - 1---2---3---4---5---6---7
  - Not at all                      Very Much

- **Studying together:**
  - 1---2---3---4---5---6---7
  - Not at all                      Very Much

- **Meeting for coffee:**
  - 1---2---3---4---5---6---7
  - Not at all                      Very Much

- **Going out on a date:**
  - 1---2---3---4---5---6---7
  - Not at all                      Very Much

- **Introducing him to your friends:**
  - 1---2---3---4---5---6---7
  - Not at all                      Very Much

- **Introducing him to your parents:**
  - 1---2---3---4---5---6---7
  - Not at all                      Very Much

- **Having a casual sexual relationship:**
  - 1---2---3---4---5---6---7
  - Not at all                      Very Much

- **Having a serious romantic relationship:**
  - 1---2---3---4---5---6---7
  - Not at all                      Very Much
Appendix D.

Questionnaire on Partner’s Qualities as a Relationship Partner

**Does he* seem like the kind of guy who:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Would care for his girlfriend</th>
<th>Scale: 1 (Do not Agree) to 7 (Strongly Agree)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Would cherish his girlfriend</td>
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<tr>
<td>Would protect his girlfriend</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Would provide for his girlfriend</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Would listen equally to his girlfriend</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would ask his girlfriend for her ideas and opinions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Would be genuinely interested in his girlfriend’s goals and aspirations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would make most of the decisions in the relationship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would not let his girlfriend socialize with many others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D continued:

Would be possessive over his girlfriend

1-------------------2-------------------3-------------------4-------------------5-------------------6-------------------7
Do not Agree                       Strongly Agree

Would try to control his girlfriend’s behavior

1-------------------2-------------------3-------------------4-------------------5-------------------6-------------------7
Do not Agree                       Strongly Agree

Would intimidate his girlfriend

1-------------------2-------------------3-------------------4-------------------5-------------------6-------------------7
Do not Agree                       Strongly Agree

Would use physical force or threats in a fight with his girlfriend

1-------------------2-------------------3-------------------4-------------------5-------------------6-------------------7
Do not Agree                       Strongly Agree

*refers to experimental partner
Appendix E.

Questionnaire on Feelings of Stake.

1. I feel I would have something to gain in a relationship with this person.

2. I would be strongly invested in this relationship.

3. I want to be in a relationship with this person.

4. I would not get very involved in a relationship with this person.*

5. I feel there would be a significant purpose for being in a relationship with this person.

6. Leaving this relationship would compromise something important to me.

*reverse-coded
Table 1.

Study 1: Correlations among Independent and Dependent Variables.

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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</table>

Note. Profile (1 = benevolent, 2 = hostile). ^0 = not primed, 1 = primed. All dependent measures on a 7-point scale. *p < .05, **p < .01
Table 2.

Study 2: Means and Standard Deviations on Dependent Variables as a Function of Prime

<table>
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<td>3.31 (.13)b</td>
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*Note.* Means are on a 7-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree). Standard deviations are in parentheses. Means with different sub-scripts are significantly different according to Tukey’s post-hoc analyses.
## Table 3.

### Study 2: Correlations among Independent and Dependent Variables

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*Note. \(^a\)0 = not primed, 1 = primed. 0 = not matched, 1 = matched. All dependent measures on a 7-point scale. *p < .05, **p < .01*
Table 4.

Study 3: Correlations among Independent and Dependent Variables.

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Note.  <sup>a</sup>(0 = not matched, 1 = matched).  <sup>b</sup>(0 = not complimented, 1 = complimented). All dependent measures on a 7-point scale. *p < .05, **p < .01
Figure 1.

Study 2: Rating of Comments as Sexist as a Function of Prime and Matched Status
Study 2: Ratings of Comments as Common as a Function of Prime and Matched Status

Condition

Rated Common

Matched
Not Match

Trad
Egal
Neutral
Figure 3.

Study 2: Ratings of Partner as Potentially Abusive Toward a Girlfriend as a Function of Prime
Footnotes

1Throughout the method and results, I refer to the fictitious male student as the “partner.”

2In Study 1, HS and BS were also tested as independent variables in ANOVAs, using median splits. However, there were no significant main effects or interactions between HS and BS on any of the dependent variables.

3HS and BS were not significant predictors of any of the dependent measures when tested as median split independent variables in Study 2 either.

4Self-descriptions were later coded and analyzed to determine whether the manipulations had an effect on what women revealed or how they described themselves to their partners. Descriptions were content-coded for 1) attention to physical or bodily characteristics, 2) whether they mentioned career aspirations, 3) the number of qualities they listed about themselves (including hobbies and interests), 4) the number of qualities they listed about a (potential) intimate other, and 5) the number of phrases that matched (or were identical to) something the target said in his self-description. However, according to chi-square analyses, there were no significant differences between conditions.

5All Study 2 analyses were also run using anxiety, hostility and depression scores as a covariate. Results showed that there were still no effects of matched status on any of the dependent variables. The only effect that approached significance was in labeling the partner’s comments as sweet, F (1, 183) = 3.38, p < .068. Those who were matched rated their partners as slightly more sweet (M = 5.50, SD = .10) than those who were not matched (M = 5.28, SD = .11).

6Study 2 analyses using only participants who did not indicate that they had a boyfriend (n = 191) revealed no statistically significant effects of matched status; all Fs < 2.67, ns.

7HS and BS were not significant predictors of any of the dependent measures when tested as median split variables in Study 3 as well.