THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EXPERIENCES OF SEXISM, AMBIVALENT SEXISM, AND RELATIONSHIP QUALITY IN HETEROSEXUAL WOMEN

Except where reference is made to the work of others, the work described in this dissertation is my own and done in collaboration with my advisory committee. The dissertation does not include propriety or classified information.

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EXPERIENCES OF SEXISM, AMBIVALENT SEXISM, AND RELATIONSHIP QUALITY IN HETEROSEXUAL WOMEN

Amney J. Harper

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Amney J. Harper, daughter of Augusta and Larry Harper, was born September 1975 in Madison, Indiana. She graduated from Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in History in 1998. In 2004, she earned her Master of Arts Degree from Ball State University in Community Agency Counseling. After completion of her Bachelor's Degree, she worked in residential treatment with at-risk youth for 6 years. She entered the doctoral program in Counselor Education at Auburn University in 2004. During her graduate study, she committed herself to actively engaging in research, teaching, and campus, community, and national activism and service. This work included research into racial identity development and multicultural counseling, counseling and volunteer work at a local domestic violence shelter, and local and national service.

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this dissertation was to explore the relationship between experiences of sexism, hostile and benevolent sexist beliefs, and quality in intimate heterosexual relationship for women. This study includes a sample of 105 women currently involved in a heterosexual relationship. Participants completed four assessments: the Demographic Questionnaire, the Conflict scale of the Quality of Relationships Inventory (QRI), the Schedule of Sexist Events (SSE), and the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI). A hierarchical regression was conducted to examine the relationship between experiences of sexism, sexist beliefs, and relationship quality.

Results indicate that a relationship exists between experiences of sexism over a woman's lifetime and the extent of conflict she perceives in her romantic heterosexual relationships. However, no relationship was found between Hostile, Benevolent, or

Ambivalent Sexist beliefs and relationship quality. None of the demographic data (age, length of relationship, cohabiting/marital status) were found to interfere with the results of the analysis. Implications for these findings are discussed along with recommendations for the counseling profession.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Women report their experiences of sexism as relatively pervasive (Sabik & Tylka, 2006; Schmitt, Branscombe, & Postmes, 2003). Sexism is characterized by a range of experiences including statements made about gender stereotypes of behavior, comments and behaviors that are demeaning, discrimination in the workplace, rape and sexual assault, abuse by male partners, general sexual discrimination, and sexual objectification (Moradi & Subich, 2002; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, & Ferguson, 2001). Experiences of sexism are related with negative mental health outcomes for women; in particular, affective symptoms have been consistently linked with experiences of sexism (Albee, 2005; Jost & Kay, 2005, Klonoff, Landrine, & Campbell, 2000; Moradi & Funderbank, 2006; Moradi & Subich, 2004; Moradi & Subich, 2002; Sabik & Tylka; Schmitt, et al.; Swim, et al.; Szymanski, 2005). Sexism differs from other forms of inequality because of the extensive interactions between men and women in families, households, and other roles (Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin, 1999). Due to this difference, it is important to investigate how these extensive interactions confirm or undermine gendered beliefs and behaviors (Glick & Fiske, 1997; Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin; Rudman & Fairchild, 2007).

Gender stereotypes represent the beliefs that underlie sexism, which shape the interactions between genders (Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin, 1999). These stereotypes highlight the direct relationship between sexism and gender socialization in intimate

relationships because they explain how men and women learn to behave differently within intimate relationships (Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin). Sexism is intimately tied to gender, in that women are rewarded through sexism for behaving in traditionally feminine ways, i.e. nurturing and passive (Toller, Suter, & Trautman, 2004). In fact, female assertiveness and autonomy are perceived as being in opposition with heterosexual intimacy because they are believed to undermine traditional sexual scripts (Rudman & Fairchild, 2007). Though experiencing sexism has been found to have negative psychological implications for women (Moradi & Subich, 2004; Szymanski, 2005), and a large number of women entering therapy report also experiencing relationship problems (Synder, Heyman, & Haynes, 2005), there is a paucity of research on how these two might be related. Sexism may be an important factor to investigate in relationship to heterosexual women's relationship quality. One particular area that seems relevant to consider is the sexist beliefs of benevolent sexism.

In addition to peer socialization, traditional gender roles are perpetuated in romantic relationships through the ideology of benevolent sexism (Rudman & Fairchild, 2007). Benevolent sexism provides a means for women and men to maintain amicable relationships within the system of male dominance or patriarchy because it provides a rationale for women to assume traditional roles, though these roles hold a lesser social value than men's roles (Fischer, 2006). Benevolent sexism contains the idea that men benefit directly by cherishing and protecting women, as opposed to more hostile interactions, because men depend on women's roles in "sexual gratification, emotional intimacy, and domestic labor" (Glick & Fiske, 1997; Rudman & Fairchild, p.125). Benevolent sexism also is perpetuated by women, who in turn rely on men for "economic

stability, social prestige, and romantic love" (Glick & Fiske; Rudman & Fairchild, p. 125). Benevolent sexism creates the illusion that women, by their very existence, are naturally more suited to assume certain positions, which are complementary but "equal" to men's (Glick & Fiske). Women and men alike ascribe to this belief and instead of promoting equity, it serves to keep in place a system of inequality for women that is justified by their different status (Glick & Fiske; Jost & Kay, 2005). Despite the fact that benevolent sexism is widely believed to impact heterosexual intimate relationships, there is a paucity of research on the nature of this relationship (Aube & Koestner, 1995; Glick & Fiske; Sue & Sue, 2003). Benevolent sexism differs from hostile sexism in that hostile sexism refers to the derogatory characterizations of women, the control of women by men, negative stereotypes of women, women as sexual objects, and other subjectively negative categorizations and treatment of women (Glick & Fiske).

Benevolent sexism and hostile sexism are inextricably linked because they both serve to reinforce the dominant ideology of sexism and the system of patriarchy through enforcing women's role as uniquely different and therefore inherently unequal to men's (Glick & Fiske, 1997). Additionally, women experience both aspects, and because they both serve the same ends, it may be impossible to partial out the effects of the two. To this point, a discussion of how subtle or benevolent sexism may in particular be related to women's experiences in relationships has been established. Because a culture of sexism may impact a woman's relationship quality, it would be important to investigate both hostile and benevolent forms. This study sought to examine the nature of the relationship between experiences of sexism, benevolent and hostile sexist beliefs, and intimate heterosexual relationships. In addition to the fact that sexism differs from other systems

of oppression due to the increased contact women and men have with one another; women have also been found to experience intimate relationships differently than men (Owen-Blakemore, Lawton, & Vartanian, 2005; Sue & Sue, 2003).

The literature provides some explanation for the ways in which women may be impacted by relationships more significantly than men. For example, women have been found to devalue their relationship capabilities, and failure in relationships is often viewed as personal failure for women (Owen-Blakemore, Lawton, & Vartanian, 2005; Sue & Sue, 2003). Women also may feel inadequate when comparing themselves to their male counterparts, overvalue the importance of attaching to a male, perceive men as threatening, or view themselves as valuable only as they are serving others (Atwood, 2001). Many argue that women place more importance on social relationships, even at times to the detriment of their own needs. This is probably most evident in abusive relationships where women not only stay despite the violence, but also blame themselves for the violence, believing that if they were better wives, their partners would be able to love them more and would not perpetrate violence against them (D'Ardenne & Balakrishna, 2001). Though domestic violence befalls individuals across all ethnic and socioeconomic groups, and occurs within both homosexual and heterosexual relationships, male-to-female violence presents more repeatedly and more often results in injury or death (Kasturirangan & Williams, 2003; Mehrotra, 1999; Tilley & Brackley, 2004). Feminist theorists attribute the phenomenon of male-to-female violence within the context of the romantic relationship to "historical traditions of the patriarchal family structure, contemporary constructions of masculinity and femininity, and structural constraints that make escape difficult for women who are systematically beaten"

(Johnson, 1995, p. 284). Though violence in relationships is not typical for all relationships, it highlights the extreme of how women and men experience relationships unequally. In particular, violent relationships exemplify an extreme of how women may internalize blame and feel responsible for the success of the relationship even when their physical and mental safety have been sacrificed.

The difference in the importance of relationships for men and women can be at least partially explained by the findings that though men and women both value marriage, women exhibit a higher drive to get married (Owen-Blakemore, et al., 2005). Though over time, role expectations between married couples have become more egalitarian, differences still remain (Owen-Blakemore, et al.). Socially, both men and women are evaluated more positively when they are married (Owen-Blakemore, et al.). However since men are not constrained by the same biological timeframe to reproduce, they may experience less pressure to get married from family and friends (Owen-Blakemore, et al.). The research does not provide an understanding of how women's socialization and drive to marry may impact their future relationship quality. It is important, however, to consider how the pressure that women face to get married may impact their decisions to enter into relationships that do not meet their needs, and subsequently they may find unsatisfying in the long-term.

There are observed differences for women in their ideological beliefs about love, including differences in feeling norms about love and the importance that women attach to romance (Simon, Eder, & Evans, 1992). Feeling norms are a part of the overall cultural beliefs about love found within society (Simon, et al.). They serve as a guide for what romantic feelings and behaviors are culturally sanctioned and what ones are not (Simon,

et al.). Women are still encouraged through their gender socialization from a young age to be preoccupied with love and romantic relationships, and men are still encouraged to focus on occupational success and self-fulfillment (Simon, et al.). Another example of adherence to gender roles in relationships is found in the difference between how women and men express love (Simon, et al.). Women are more likely to express love verbally and through emotional intimacy, whereas men tend to continue to prefer to express love through sexual and instrumental means (Simon, et al.). Another significant difference is that women are more likely than men to consciously manipulate their feelings in order to live up to socially prescribed feeling norms (Simon, et al.). This manipulation requires either effort to evoke or suppress emotions, e.g. trying to fall in or out of love (Simon, et al.).

As has been discussed previously, the importance women place on being in relationships and their sense of responsibility toward the success of the relationship is reflective of the societal values about women's identity and roles. Gender role socialization, which is embedded within the culture of the United States, is one aspect of the overall culture of sexism which is used to shape and influence women's identity and roles in order to benefit men in general and perpetuate the system of patriarchy where men hold the majority of the power and control (Glick & Fiske, 1997). According to the Broad and Narrow Theory of Socialization, there are seven main sources of socialization (which encompasses gender socialization) including "family, peers, school, community, the media, the legal system, and the cultural belief system", which are the primary means by which individuals adopt the values and beliefs of their culture (Arnett, 1995, p. 523). These systems do not all perpetuate gender roles through blatantly sexist or hostile

means, but rather subtle or benevolent ideologies, expressed through sexist language for example, to promote gender stereotypes (Swim, Mallett, & Stangor, 2004). Subtle sexism promotes the same unequal status and unfair treatment for women that blatant sexism does; however, many people do not recognize it as sexism because it is deeply ingrained in our socialization and thus considered normative (Swim, et al.). Gender is a social construct and not a biological one; gender and sex merge when society assigns different behaviors as appropriate or inappropriate for particular genders (Toller, et al., 2004). A woman's ability to establish satisfying intimate relationships may be undermined by experiences of sexism beginning in the family of origin (Atwood, 2001). In addition to the importance of the family of origin, peer socialization seems to play a particularly important role in the development of cultural values of romantic relationships (Simon, et al., 1992).

During adolescence, girls abandon earlier concerns with school and sports to focus on becoming popular, being liked, and their physical appearance (Simon, et al., 1992). At this stage of development, peers provide the main source of socialization for learning gender roles within relationships and romantic relationship norms (Simon, et al.). Norms such as monogamy, heterosexuality, exclusivity, and the relative importance of romantic relationships, are all enforced through socialization via the peer group, and though these norms do not define behavior, they are found to constrain it (Simon, et al.). Additional findings show that similar to how married men and women are viewed more positively than their single counterparts, girls are appraised as being more attractive by their peers when they are involved in a romantic relationship (Simon, et al.). Preoccupation with romantic relationships comes into full swing for many girls during

this time, which is demonstrated by the frequency of romantic love as a topic of conversation for adolescent girls (Simon, et al.). Despite the fact that romantic cultural scripts persist, there are individual differences among women to the extent that they adhere to them (Rudman & Fairchild, 2007).

Regardless of the extent to which women follow cultural scripts about love, intimate relationships represent an important need for both women and men (Yakushko, 2005). Satisfying intimate relationships contribute significantly to happiness and meaning of life for individuals (Yakushko). When relationships are satisfying, many benefits can be seen for both partners such as social support, protection from outside stressors, and health promotion (Tolpin, Cohen, Gunthert, & Farrehi, 2006). Conversely, in a recent study relationship problems were found to be the number one cause of acute emotional distress (Synder, et al., 2005). Though presenting problems in therapy vary, people experiencing marital problems are overrepresented in people seeking mental health services (Synder, et al.). Studies have shown that marital problems are linked to psychological distress and were the number one reason that people sought out therapy (Synder, et al.; Vaughn & Matyastick Baier, 1999). Symptoms of depression, for example, have been consistently linked to relationship functioning in both dating and married couples, though the causal direction remains unclear (Cramer, 2004; Remen & Chambless, 2001; Toplin, et al., 2006). Rates of approximately 50% have been found where at least one partner was clinically depressed in couples presenting for treatment of marital problems (Chambless & Ramen, 2001). When at least one partner is depressed, their interactions are characterized by an increase in tension, hostility, and negative communications (Chambless & Ramen).

Relationship problems have been found consistently to be prevalent in both community and treatment samples (Synder, et al., 2005). It is obvious that marital problems continue to be a significant occurrence in the United States given the divorce rate of approximately 50%, half of which occur in the first 7 or 8 years of marriage (Snyder, et al.). A majority of marriages, regardless of whether or not divorce is eventually sought, at some point experience turbulent times that increase the risk of dissolution and the development of psychological symptoms, such as depression or anxiety, for one or both partners (Synder, et al.). Only a third of married individuals report being "very happy" with their marriage (Synder, et al.). Studies have also linked relationship problems to physical complaints as well, with one study citing a 21% reduction in the use of health care services after patients received marital or family therapy (Synder, et al.). Though marital and relationship quality are important for both men and women, women are at particular risk when problems occur. Gender differences have specifically been found in the association between relationship satisfaction and depression, with relationship dissatisfaction predicting later dysphoria more commonly for women than men (Ramen & Chambless, 2001).

Being involved in satisfying intimate relationships is important for all individuals. Women, however, experience relationships differently due to the process of gender socialization, by which they adopt feeling norms, roles, and expectations for intimate relationships. Gender socialization is the means through which the ideology of sexism is passed on to members of a given culture. This study sought to add to the body of literature informing counseling practice with women seeking services for relationship

problems through investigating the potential relationship between Experiences of Sexism, Benevolent and Hostile Sexist beliefs, and Relationship Quality.

Purpose of the Study

Women's experiences of sexism are relatively pervasive (Sabik & Tylka, 2006; Schmitt, et al., 2003). Women experience benevolent and hostile sexism in their day to day experiences, though many of these experiences may go undetected because they are viewed as normative (Swim, et al., 2004). Women are socialized from an early age into certain roles that influence how they perceive and experience relationships (Atwood, 2001), which is consistent with sexist ideology because it promotes unequal treatment of women (Glick & Fiske, 1997). Sexism has been shown to have negative psychological implications for women (Moradi & Subich, 2002; Szymanski, 2005), and considering the relevance of romantic relationships to gender role socialization, it is important that an exploration be made into the possibility that women's relationship quality may be related to their experiences of and attitudes towards sexism (Atwood). The purpose of this study was to add to the body of literature that informs counseling practice with women seeking help for problems with intimate relationships by investigating how the sociocultural variable of sexism may be related to quality within intimate relationships.

Sexism may negatively impact intimate heterosexual relationships in a variety of ways that have been previously unexplored (Glick & Fiske, 1997). Women have been found to be more prone to depressive symptoms when they are dissatisfied in relationships (Remen & Chambless, 2001). Sue and Sue (2003) argue that depression could arise from women's socialization to maintain and succeed in their relationships,

even at the cost of their own needs and desires. Women are socialized through gender roles to place higher importance on romantic relationships than men, blame themselves when relationships fail, and devalue their own relationship capabilities (Owen-Blakemore, et al., 2005; Sue & Sue). Of all the reasons people seek therapy, relationship problems are the most common (Synder, et al., 2005; Vaughn & Matyastick-Baier, 2000). Research into the impact of sexism for women has been relegated to psychological and physical health to date. This study sought to further this research through investigating the role of sexism on intimate heterosexual relationship quality for women.

Significance of the Study

Relationship quality is an important component of mental health for women. Women experience relationships differently than men in the importance they place upon attachment with a partner, relationship success, and the roles that they inhabit. Gender socialization plays a large role in creating these differences. Understanding how the culture of sexism may relate to quality in relationships for women has been previously unexplored, therefore this study has added to the body of literature informing counselors working with this group.

Specifically, this study sought to help counselors better understand how socio-environmental factors, specifically sexism, were related to their lives. The results of this study provide implications for counselors. On an individual basis (micro-level), helping women to explore and understand how sexism has impacted them personally is warranted when the client presents with relationship problems. On a broad or macro-level, the call to advocacy is strengthened in order to reduce the overall impact of sexism on women's

lives. Additionally, this study supports the need to add to the body of literature through future studies examining sexism, which ultimately will inform counseling practice.

Research Hypothesis

1. There is a statistically significant relationship between women's relationship quality and benevolent sexist beliefs.
2. There is a statistically significant relationship between women's relationship quality and hostile sexist beliefs.
3. There is a statistically significant relationship between women's relationship quality and number of experiences of sexist events.
4. One variable: benevolent sexist beliefs, hostile sexist beliefs, or number of experiences of sexist events, will more strongly relate to women's relationship quality than the other variables.
5. The interaction between women's hostile and benevolent sexist beliefs and their experiences of sexism will have a unique relationship with relationship quality.

Operational Definitions

Ambivalent sexism: Ambivalent sexism is a concept based on Ambivalent Sexism Theory (Glick & Fiske, 1997). This theory provides a means of examining both the benevolent and hostile forms of sexism. Some individuals may endorse high levels of both Hostile and Benevolent sexism, though the two concepts are seemingly opposing (subjectively positive and subjectively negative views of women held at the same time). However, the concept of Ambivalent Sexism represents this particular combination. In

this study, Ambivalent Sexism will be defined as the two-way interaction between Hostile and Benevolent Sexism. More specifically, Ambivalent Sexism refers to the interaction between the two when levels of both are high. In regards to the results and discussion sections for this study, the distinction between the two was made, and Ambivalent Sexism refers specifically to the interaction between high levels of both Benevolent and Hostile Sexism.

Benevolent sexism: Benevolent sexism is characterized by "kinder and gentler justifications of male dominance and prescribed gender roles; it recognizes men's dependence on women (i.e. women's dyadic power) and embraces a romanticized view of sexual relationships with women" (Glick & Fiske, 1997, p.120). Additionally, in contrast to hostile sexism, benevolent sexism encompasses protective paternalism and an idealization of women (Glick & Fiske). In this study, Benevolent Sexism refers to the subjectively positive beliefs about women that reinforce their different yet unequal status. This term was measured by the Benevolent Sexism (BS) Subscale score on the ASI.

Hostile sexism: Hostile sexism is characterized by "dominative paternalism, derogatory beliefs, and heterosexual hostility" (Glick & Fiske, 1997, p. 119). In this study, hostile sexism refers specifically to the subjectively negative beliefs about women that reinforce women's unequal treatment in society. This term was measured by the Hostile Sexism (HS) Subscale on the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI).

Relationship quality: Relationship quality was measured using the Quality of Relationships Inventory (QRI) (Verhofstadt, Buysse, Rosseel, & Peene, 2006). The QRI measures specific aspects of relationship quality: perceived social support from the relationship under examination, the extent of conflict or ambivalence in the relationship,

and perceptions of how positive, important, and secure the relationship is (Verhofstadt, et al.). High relationship quality would be described as one that is highly supportive, deep, and low in conflict (Verhofstadt, et al.). Relationship quality will be broadly discussed in the literature review through a discussion of experiences of problems in relationships, relationship satisfaction, and importance of intimate relationships, all of which are related to overall relationship quality. For the purposes of this study, however, the concept of relationship quality will be operationalized through the specific aspect that will be measured: conflict in intimate relationships. As relationship problems were of most concern, this study chose to focus specifically on this aspect of Relationship Quality. This was measured through the Conflict Scale of the Quality of Relationships Inventory, which is related to the other scales, but also is able to stand alone in analysis.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Sexism

Labeling oneself and others as male or female is one of two or three primary social categories that are deemed as essential in order to interact in our culture (Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin, 1999). This categorization has been found to be made automatically by people, based on physical characteristics that are understood within the culture to indicate physical sex differences (Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin). The interactions that occur between people are shaped by cultural gender beliefs and identities, which produce interaction patterns that are deemed appropriate based on the gender categorization of those interacting (Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin). This "gender system" defines males and females as distinctly different in social ways, and the inequality that exists between men and women is justified through this perceived difference (Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin). Inequality based on sex or gender categorization is commonly referred to as sexism. Campbell, Schnellenberg, and Senn (1997) define sexism as "the endorsement of discriminatory or prejudicial beliefs based on sex, is typically equated with stereotypical conceptions of the sexes and the adoption of a traditional gender-role ideology" (pg. 89).

Sexism refers to both negative attitudes and behaviors towards women based on the underlying assumption of women's inferiority or difference to men as a group (Sakalh, 2001). Weber and Wade (1995) make the distinction that sexism is both

attitudinal and behavioral, based on the underlying assumption of women's inferiority to men. Stereotypes reflect some of the underlying beliefs held in sexism. Stereotypes of women generally include notions that women are "warm, sociable, interdependent, and relationship oriented" whereas men are typecast as "competent, assertive, independent, and achievement oriented" (Jost & Kay, 2005). Gender stereotypes represent the beliefs that underlie the gender system, which shape interactions between genders (Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin, 1999). These stereotypes highlight the direct relationship between sexism and gender socialization in intimate relationships because they explain how men and women learn to behave differently within intimate relationships. Ridgeway and Smith-Lovin argue that "The high rate of contact between men and women raises important questions about how interaction creates experiences that confirm, or potentially could undermine, the beliefs about gender differences and inequality that underlie the gender system" (p. 191). Though some information is known about how the gender system or sexism impacts interactions between men and women in intimate relationships, what is not known is how sexism is related to how satisfying intimate relationships are to women and men in heterosexual relationships. This study sought to add to that body of research.

In order to further the goal of exploring how sexism impacts the lives of women and contributes to their difficulties, the aim of this research was to investigate an area in the research that has been relatively untouched: the relationship of sexism and intimate relationship quality. Sabik and Tylka (2006) argue that sexist events are "widespread" and "intertwined within women's lives" (p. 77). The patriarchal family structure is a pervasive component of American culture and dominant throughout society (Robinson, 1993). Three basic findings in the research on interaction are relevant to this research.

First, gender differences are perceived as pervasive in interactions (Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin, 1999). Secondly, interactions between peers of equal status and power show fewer differences in gendered behavior (Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin). Lastly, the majority of interactions between men and women do not occur within equal status and power (Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin). The family structure provides a fertile ground for which to explore the implications of sexism. Though the literature has established how gender differences can be found in experiences in relationships and the assertion is made that gender socialization explains the occurrence, there was a paucity of research investigating the potential relationship between experiences of sexism, sexist attitudes, and quality in relationships. First, however, the theories that guide our understanding of sexism will be outlined in order to explain further what sexism is. Then the literature on how sexism impacts the lives of women will be explored. Included in this discussion will be how women perceive and behave differently in intimate relationships than men.

Theory

Feminist Theory

In the literature on sexism, feminist theory is consistently discussed (Atwood, 2001; Fischer, 2006; Moradi & Subich, 2002; Ossana, Helms, & Leonard, 1992; Sabik & Tylka, 2006; Swim et al., 2001; Szymanski, 2005; Toller, et al., 2004). Even when it is not explicitly discussed, it is often apparent that the language and lens of feminist theory is being employed. Feminist theory is seen to be relevant because it is a theoretical lens that acknowledges the impact of systemic discrimination, i.e. sexism, on the lives of women (Atwood; Moradi & Subich; Sabik & Tylka; Szymanski). The most core and

basic tenet of feminism, "The Personal is Political" specifically looks at how women's personal lives (e.g. intimate relationships) are reflections of the larger socio-cultural forces (e.g. how sexism impacts women differently in their personal spaces such as relationships). Feminist theory argues that women cannot live in a society where sexism is central to its structure and not experience negative consequences in their personal lives. Feminist theory has aided in the research helping counselors to understand how systemic, external, and socio-cultural factors affect the lives women, affecting what issues they present with in counseling (Szymanski), and to explain gendered behavior (Toller, et al.). "The personal is political" refers to the idea that women's personal experiences represent larger socio-cultural themes (i.e. sexism), and in order to help women cope with their personal problems that result from these larger forces, it is important to help them understand it in the larger context (Moradi & Subich; Sabik & Tylka; Szymanski). Atwood asserts that in order to work with women, we need to use feminist theory to break down the male-dominated discourse that is used in our culture to help women arrive at new meanings for themselves. As it has proved relevant in the literature, a feminist lens will be used throughout this study as well, in order to understand the effects of sexism more fully.

Sexism has its roots in patriarchy, which is found in nearly all human societies (Glick & Fiske, 1997). Patriarchy determines that men control politics, the legal system, economics, and religious structures within society (Sakalli, 2001). Through patriarchy or male structural power, sexism continues to permeate many aspects of women's lives to their detriment. Across social theories of prejudice, a common tie is found between the oppressed occupying a lower status role and the oppressor employing hostile stereotypes

to justify exploitation (Glick & Fiske). However, due to the connection that women and men have in intimate relationships and kinship, more benevolent ideologies have emerged that also sustain the larger system of gender inequality (Glick & Fiske). To better understand the relationship between these benevolent and hostile sexist ideologies, Glick and Fiske developed a theory of Ambivalent Sexism.

Ambivalent Sexism Theory

Glick and Fiske (1997) broaden our understanding of how sexism operates in intimate relationships through Ambivalent Sexism Theory. According to this theory, sexism is dualistic in nature in that there are at the same time hostile and benevolent components. Sabik and Tylka (2006) report that women experience discrimination and devaluation often when interacting with significant others as well as acquaintances. Due to the fact that women live in intimate connection with men, who represent the dominant group (as brothers, fathers, spouses, boyfriends, etc.), over long periods of time, it necessitates that the nature of the intergroup attitudes would not be solely hostile (Glick & Fiske). Unlike other forms of oppression (e.g. racism, classism, heterosexism, etc.), sexual reproduction alone generally requires a continued intimate connection between the dominant and subordinate group (Glick & Fiske; Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin, 1999).

There are, then, two reasons for benevolent ideologies to emerge (Glick & Fiske, 1997). First, members of the dominant group do not want to view themselves as unjust or exploitive; therefore, they also truly believe that the unequal treatment of women is beneficial or needed (i.e. “they need our protection”; Glick & Fiske). Benevolent sexism provides a means for women and men to maintain amicable relationships through the system of male dominance because it provides a rationale for the treatment and a role for

women, which is cherished, though this role holds a lesser value than men's roles (Fischer, 2006). Therefore, benevolent sexism is a means to legitimize hostile sexism, because it provides a more attractive face to the inequality experienced by women (Fischer). Secondly, benevolent ideologies serve to elicit cooperation from the oppressed group through creating a means for members of the group to be rewarded for fitting the role prescribed for them (Glick & Fiske; Fischer).

Sexism is therefore intimately tied to gender, in that women are rewarded through the system of sexism for behaving in traditionally feminine ways (i.e. nurturing and passive) (Toller, et al., 2004). Rewards can come in the form of special treatment or protection from harsh realities or communication (Forbes, Jung, & Haas, 2006). Similarly, men are also rewarded for behaving in traditionally masculine ways, such as acting tough, maintaining control, being aggressive, and even violent (Toller, et al.). Therefore sexism perpetuates itself by rewarding both sexes for maintaining consistent behavior for their respective gender. Women who are capable of competing through the use of traditional masculine behaviors and attributes often meet with the unfair advantage of being negatively viewed for acting in traditionally masculine ways instead of being seen as capable and competent to compete in a man's world (Fischer, 2006; Forbes, et al.) Due to this, the belief that women are incapable and need to be protected is repeatedly validated.

According to Glick and Fiske (1997), dominant group members buy into benevolent sexist beliefs, and sincerely hold affection for the subordinate group members. Benevolent sexism is defined by Glick and Fiske as a "kinder and gentler justification of male dominance and prescribed gender roles; it recognizes men's

dependence on women for intimate partnership and sexual reproduction (i.e. women's dyadic power) and embraces a romanticized view of sexual relationships with women" (p. 121). Forbes, et al. (2006) give two examples of benevolent sexism: men opening doors for women, and being shielded from coarse words, jokes about sex, as well as any other perceived threat to their "purity" or delicacy. Though it may seem flattering for women to be viewed as "helpful, kind, gentle, warm, and empathic", these perceptions contribute to the idea that women are not as competent as men (Jost & Kay, 2005).

"Hostile sexism", on the other hand, "seeks to justify male power, traditional gender roles, and men's exploitation of women as sexual objects through derogatory characterizations of women" and is the primary aspect of sexism on which most studies focus (Glick & Fiske, 1997, p. 121). Fischer (2006) describes hostile sexism as "overtly negative and restrictive prejudice against women" (p. 410). Benevolent and hostile sexism are inexorably tied to one another because the end result of both is the subjugation of women (Forbes, et al., 2006; Fischer, 2006). Both serve to justify women's subordination to men (Fischer; Jost & Kay, 2005). Though the belief that women should be protected may sound caring, the implication is that women are weaker than men, which reinforces male dominance (Fischer).

To elaborate, benevolent sexism embodies protective paternalism, as coined by Jackman (1994 as cited in Glick & Fiske, 1997; Jost & Kay, 2005), which is usually viewed by men in positive terms (Glick & Fiske). Protective paternalism overlays the assumption that women are less competent than men, that they are fragile and need protection, and that women inherently need the assistance of men in order to survive (Glick & Fiske). Men usually see their role with women in positive terms as their

protectors, while women may recognize the underlying assumptions and find them incorrect and insulting (Glick & Fiske; Fischer, 2006). Heterosexual intimacy is described by Fischer as necessary and collaborative with notions of protective paternalism because it asserts that men need women in order to be whole. However, many aspects of sexism can be overlooked by women, because they occur so frequently (i.e. people paying more attention to men during conversation than women) that they are viewed as typical or usual (Swim et al., 2001). Women also may be likely to hold benevolent sexists beliefs as a means of protection from what they perceive as a hostile environment (Fischer). Though some women do buy into benevolent sexism, women have been found to have lower levels of both benevolent and hostile sexism than men (Fischer, 2006). "Jackman's (1994) velvet glove theory of protective paternalism, Sianisu and Pratto's (1999) theory of social dominance, and Jost and Banaji's (1994) theory of system justification" all "hold that members of subordinated groups are often complicit in their own subordination" (Jost & Kay, p. 498). System justification theory asserts that when each group within society has some advantages and some disadvantages and where women's roles are seen as complimentary but equal, that on the whole, the system is viewed as fair and legitimate (Jost & Kay). Benevolent and hostile sexism are seen to be endorsed by women and men the most in countries where women's status in society was the lowest (Jost & Kay), which suggests that women may buy into sexism more when they perceive their environment as more hostile. On the other side of protective paternalism is dominative paternalism, which is the belief that women are inferior and men should control them (Glick & Fiske). Dominative paternalism sets the stage for

protective paternalism, because it asserts that men have greater authority, power, and strength, and are therefore naturally suited to take on the role of protector.

Similar to the Ambivalent Sexism Theory proposed by Glick and Fiske (1997), Swim, et al. (2004) describe sexism as having many forms, including blatant, covert, and subtle. Blatant and covert sexism mirror hostile and benevolent sexism of the ambivalent sexism theory in that it describes the "unequal and unfair treatment of women relative to men" (p. 117) that is open and obvious (blatant) or hidden (covert). Parallel to the concept of benevolent sexism, Swim, et al. describe subtle sexism as the use of sexism that is so common and normative in people's experiences, that though it represents unfair treatment, it is not recognized as such because it does not seem to be unusual. They add that subtle sexism is not intentionally harmful, like its counterparts, though it may be prevalent and have negative implications for women. An example of this is the use of sexist language, which "reinforces and perpetuates gender stereotypes and status differences between women and men" (p.121). Similarly, Jost and Kay (2005) discuss how the gender stereotypes for women and men compliment one another and seem to create a balance that is easily accepted by men and women. Additionally, they explain the dual nature of sexism by describing how it is believed that women should both be placed on a pedestal and at the same time subjugated. Another aspect of sexism that has begun to show up in the literature is modern sexism, which goes beyond just holding negative views of women to resisting women's claims that sexism still exists and as such, responses to demands for equality are often met with an unsympathetic ear (Campbell, et al., 1997). The first studies of "subtle" or "modern" sexism come from the literature on racism, where it became apparent that though people held racist beliefs, they had learned

that they were socially inappropriate, and therefore would avoid directly endorsing items that were obviously racist (Weber & Wade, 1995). Research then turned toward attempting to analyze more subtle forms. In the sexism literature, one way to measure this was to assess ideas like people's reactions to the "career woman", for example. The benevolent sexism measure is similar in that it assesses items related to ideas that are not seen as overtly aggressive towards women, and in fact, often seem to be positive (Glick & Fiske). These measures all tap into beliefs about gender which are found within the broader culture. These beliefs about gender differences, together with structural inequality, impact the ways men and women interact in their everyday interactions (Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin, 1999). One could easily make the argument that sexism has negative implications for both men and women because it restricts the culturally appropriate range of interactions. However, from the theoretical discussion here, it can be drawn that women receive more negative outcomes from the system and men receive more benefits from this system of unequal status, which is why this study sought to gain a deeper understanding, in particular, of the ways women are affected by sexism. In order to empirically support this theoretical claim, a discussion follows of the ways women are more negatively impacted by sexism than men.

Frequency and Effects of Sexism on Women

Women report their experiences of discrimination based on their sex as relatively pervasive (Sabik & Tylka, 2006; Schmitt, et al., 2003), whereas men report infrequent and rare occurrences (Schmitt, et al.). Women experience sexism throughout their lives as a broad range of different events, such as sexist remarks, discrimination at work, rape,

sexual assault, intimate partner violence, sexual coercion, etc. (Matteson & Moradi, 2005; Moradi & Subich, 2002). Sexism has broad psychological, personal, and social implications for women. In one article, consisting of two separate qualitative studies reviewing 40 women's diaries, women reported experiencing a mean of 1.5 to 6.11 incidents of sexism in a week (Swim, et al., 2001). Participants' descriptions of these events included: being labeled in a derogatory way (i.e. "bitch" or "chick" [p. 37]), sexist jokes, being excluded in conversation, hearing sexist language, references to sexual acts, catcalls, violence, etc. Within these studies, over one-third of participants reported that they did not record every incident that occurred; therefore the estimate of one event per week is a conservative representation of women's experiences. Continual experiences of sexism in academic environments often results in women believing that they are in fact inferior to men (Ossana, et al., 1992). Over time, this can result in women not achieving their full potential. Just the knowledge that stereotypes exist has been proven damaging to intellectual and athletic performance (Jost & Kay, 2005). Jost and Kay describe this phenomenon by explaining that stereotypes have a priming effect or activation feature. Even when people do not consciously endorse stereotypes, just hearing them results in an impact on judgment and behavior (Jost & Kay).

It has been well supported that sexism has related negatively with mental health outcomes for women (Albee, 2005; Jost & Kay, 2005, Klonoff, et al., 2000; Moradi & Funderbank, 2006; Moradi & Subich, 2004, 2002; Sabik & Tylka, 2006; Schmitt, et al., 2002; Swim et al., 2001; Szymanski, 2005). The research investigating the psychological impact of sexism began decades ago. "As early as 1939, Karen Horney recognized that the existence of parental "preference for a brother" was "one of the many factors

impressing on the female child the feeling that she is inferior" (as cited in Atwood, 2001, p. 24). In the United States, statistics continue to indicate the preference for male children over that of female children (Atwood). Atwood argues that sexism combines with other life stressors to create significant psychological distress in women resulting in them needing to seek therapy. The symptoms she refers to occurring most commonly as a result are depression and anxiety (Atwood).

There have been many studies in recent years that have added to our understanding of the impact of sexism on women's mental health, particularly in relation to affective symptoms. Though affective symptoms have been consistently linked with experiences of sexism for women, relationship distress, which is the single-most common presenting problem in therapy (Snyder, et al., 2005) has not been fully investigated prior to the current study. Some of the symptoms women experience that have been found to be linked to experiencing sexist events include: "total psychological symptoms, obsessive-compulsivity, interpersonal sensitivity, anxiety, and premenstrual symptoms" (Klonoff, et al., 2000; Moradi & Subich, 2004, p. 50). Even events that are often discounted by women as usual or the norm, may impact their mental health negatively (Moradi & Subich, 2002). Albee (2005) asserts that among the sources of stress experienced by women is "poverty, rampant sexism, being born unwanted, and other forms of social injustice" (p. 37). Sexual harassment was found to be responsible for the unique variance in psychological symptoms experienced by homeless women (Moradi & Subich, 2002). Further, sexual harassment was found to impact employed women, in that 20% of women experiencing sexual harassment reported feelings of depression, 68% expressed feelings of anger, and 80% felt disgust (Moradi & Subich, 2002). Additionally,

disordered eating and disordered attitudes about eating have been found to relate to experiences of sexual objectification in college women (Moradi & Funderbank, 2006; Sabik & Tylka, 2006). Additionally, women are more likely than men to present with symptoms and/or be diagnosed with disorders such as depression, anxiety, and somatization (Klonoff, et al.). Women are also found, in general, to be exposed to a greater number of stressful life events (Klonoff, et al.).

In a study of African American women who experienced both racist and sexist events, results indicated a positive correlation with psychological distress (Moradi & Subich, 2003 as cited in Moradi & Funderbank, 2006). Additionally, sexism alone, in this study, also was found to be a unique predictor of distress (Moradi & Funderbank). Similarly in a study of lesbians, both heterosexism and sexism were found to contribute to overall negative psychological symptoms (Szymanski, 2005). This study added to the literature through demonstrating how sexual orientation is an important component of women's experiences and subsequent mental health (Szymanski). Heterosexism has been considered one aspect of sexist beliefs because it is often based on rigid views of gender roles within society (Campbell, et al., 1997). Both this study and the study examining racism and sexism specifically relate to the question of how different sources of oppression contribute to current difficulties experienced by women with multiple minority identities.

Much of the literature on sexism has come from the model provided by studies on racism (Ossana, et al., 1992; Weber & Wade, 1995). Different forms of oppression may operate under similar themes. In studying the role of internalized homophobia and relationship satisfaction, Ross and Simon Rosser (1996) found that all four dimensions of

internalized homophobia were significantly related with shorter duration of relationships as well as a decrease in relationship satisfaction. Specifically, they found that the expectation or perception of homophobic responses were more important than their actual experiences of other's homophobia, suggesting that how they internalized was more important that just having experienced it (Ross & Simon Rosser). One could argue that heterosexuals may be exempt from significant impact on relationship quality because heterosexual relationships themselves are not viewed negatively by society; however, a part of this relationship includes how gay men felt about being gay in a heterosexist environment, just as a part of sexism for women is how they feel about being women in a sexist environment.

Klonoff, et al. (2000) report that sexist discrimination accounted for the unique variance in the report of psychological symptoms experienced by women over that reported by men. This study provided overwhelming results, such as the impact of anxiety, where experiences of sexism accounted for up to 78% of the variance between men and women (Klonoff, et al.). In that same study, stepwise regression was used to partial out effects based on ethnicity, and still the results overwhelmingly showed that sexism was the best predictor on every scale. It showed up to 46% of the variance in symptoms of depression, and 44% in premenstrual symptoms (Klonoff, et al.). Additionally, it has been reported that in a sample of 1279 women, only three reported no sexist discrimination in the last year, but none reported no sexist discrimination in their lifetime (Klonoff, et al.). In a Singaporean study, masculinity was been found to be strongly correlated with psychological well-being according to Pei-Hui and Ward (2001). Additionally, the literature has been inconsistent prior to the study by Pei-Hui and Ward,

where significant results were not found for androgynous individuals and their mental health. Despite the overwhelming evidence that sexism is related to mental health, no investigation to date has been made into the potential negative outcomes in relationships, despite the fact that this is the number one reason individuals seek therapy (Snyder, et al., 2005). The relationship between depression and relationship satisfaction and the parallel relationship between depression and experiences of sexism for women makes the possibility that a relationship between the two more intriguing. For example, with a relationship between relationship quality and experiences of sexism, the role of depression can be further explored to determine if it is particularly affected by this link.

One study found that experiences of everyday sexism impacted the psychological health of women "by decreasing their comfort, increasing their feelings of anger and depression, and decreasing their state self-esteem" (Swim et al., 2001, p. 31). Men responded similarly to everyday sexism, in that it affected their anger, depression, and self-esteem; however men report far fewer sexist events, and therefore the overall impact on their mental health was less (Swim et al.). A major strength of this study was that it examined incidents as they occurred, through daily diary entries, instead of asking participants to remember what happened over a period of time in the past. This allows for a more detailed description of mundane events, which might have been forgotten otherwise because they are considered usual. Two problems in using retrospective surveys are that participants may not label subtle forms of sexism as sexism, instead dismissing it, and secondly, participants may view isolated events as insignificant and minimize its importance over time. These isolated events may be important to the psychological well-being of the participant, because they may hold a cumulative

detrimental effect. A limit of using the daily diary as means of examination, however, is that participants in this study noted that participation in the study increased their personal awareness of the occurrence of sexist events, and therefore impacted their recording of the events (Swim et al.). This study also furthered the knowledge base available in the literature because it not only recorded psychological symptoms, but also evaluated overall mood and state self-esteem.

It has been shown that experiences of everyday sexism can be psychologically threatening because it activates a stereotypical threat, which can increase concerns related to future provocation (Swim et al., 2001). Results of this study showed that one of the most common psychological responses to experiences of sexism was feeling angry or upset (Swim et al.). Seventy-five percent of the incidents resulted in angry feelings for the women in the study. Another interesting piece of information obtained from this study was that women's comfort level and feelings of surprise increased during the event, and decreased after the event was over (Swim et al.). This indicates where other literature does not, that these events make an immediate emotional impact. Additionally, the study found that the more frequently people experienced sexist events, the lower their level of social state self-esteem and the higher their level of anxiety (Swim et al.).

The psychological impact of prejudice is not solely specific to a situation in which a member of a disadvantaged group is the target of discrimination, but can be seen simply when members of the disadvantaged group interact with members of the privileged group (Schmitt, et al., 2002). Women live in intimate connection with men as their husbands, fathers, sons, boyfriends, etc. and therefore are more likely to interact with members of the dominant group (i.e., men). Several studies have found that when a disadvantaged

group perceives discrimination as entrenched within the culture, that it impacts well-being negatively (Schmitt, et al.). The study by Schmitt, et al. sought to examine the emotional responses of women when gender discrimination is pervasive versus when it rare. They found that the relationship between experiences of discrimination and negative psychological impact was moderated by the pervasiveness of discrimination (Schmitt, et al.).

The importance of the above study is that it highlights two aspects of sexism. First is that experiencing sexism in an environment in which it does not exist as the norm, in itself, might not impact individual well-being. Secondly, it aids in our understanding that whether or not women perceive events as sexist, the psychological impact may still threaten their psychological well being. This is consistent with the assertion made by Jost and Kay (2005) that thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are impacted by the presence of stereotypes in society as a common knowledge, even if the individual does not consciously endorse them. Contrary to these findings, one study found that the link between perceptions of women's inequity and psychological distress was limited (Corning, 2002 as cited in Moradi & Subich, 2004). Moradi and Subich believe that their limited findings were due to the design of the study, which did not assess specific recall of events and instead focused on general perceptions of access to resources. Despite their limited findings, this study also added important information for counselors about the role of sexism on mental health.

An important role for counselors is to address issues that impact the mental health of disadvantaged groups (Moradi & Subich, 2002; Szymanski, 2005). It is therefore important for counselors to understand how sexism impacts women's lives and

particularly, their mental health (Moradi & Subich, 2002; Szymanski). The two types of predictors of a psychological impact on women's lives can be described as distal and proximal (Moradi & Subich, 2004, 2002). Distal predictors are made up of events that occur throughout women's lives, that may contribute to psychological symptoms, but do not directly lead to them; whereas proximal predictors are described as those occurring in the last year of a woman's life, and that may have a more direct effect (Moradi & Subich, 2004, 2002). Additionally, brutal or physical experiences of sexist discrimination relate as proximal predictors, regardless of when they occur (Moradi & Subich, 2004). Both proximal and distal predictors are related to psychological symptoms for women (Moradi & Subich, 2004). Lifetime events have been specifically linked to somatic symptoms (Moradi & Subich, 2004). For example, recent events have been linked to depressive symptomology, when controlling for the effects found in stressful life events outside of sexism (Moradi & Subich, 2004).

Research into the impact of sexism on women has been relegated to psychological and physical health to date. The literature provides several indications that an investigation into the role of sexism in relationship quality is warranted and necessary in order to better understand the impact of sexism on the lives of women (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin, 1999). This study aims to further that research in order to contribute to counselor's understanding of the issue. The nature of sexism requires intimate connections between the oppressors and the oppressed through kinship and/or romantic relationships (Glick & Fiske, 1997). Due to this interconnectedness, the implications of sexism on the health of heterosexual intimate relationships should be investigated. This study seeks to explore this relationship between the experiences of

sexism, beliefs about hostile and benevolent sexism, and their connection to relationship quality. First, however, it is necessary to consider how some women are able to thrive despite experiences of sexism when others suffer mental or physical consequences.

Mediating Variables to Mental Health Consequences for Women Experiencing Sexism

Sexism is related to negative psychological consequences for some women because it requires women to cope with chronic levels of stress that result from daily hassles (Moradi & Subich, 2004). Moradi and Subich (2004) sought to examine the question of why some women may be exempt from the negative effects of sexism. To do so, they looked at the role of self esteem, which has been shown in other studies to moderate the relationship between people who thrive despite adverse life circumstances. Self-esteem has been found to be linked to resiliency in various studies including with adolescent girls who experienced negative life events as well as negative life stress and depressive symptomology among college students. A study on racism and mental health, however, found the opposite of what was expected, in that it found that "self-esteem seemed to exacerbate the link between perceived racist events and mental health in their sample" (Moradi & Subich, 2004). Corning (2002) however, found that young women experiencing sexism who had high levels of self-esteem experienced less depressive symptomology than those with low self-esteem (as cited in Moradi & Subich, 2004). The study by Moradi and Subich (2004) had findings consistent with the resiliency literature, as self-esteem was found to be supported as a moderator between experiences of sexism and mental health. Similarly, the ability to identify discrimination and externalize the blame to the oppressor contributes to a woman's ability to succeed in academic settings

(Moradi & Subich, 2002; Ossana, et al., 1992). Additionally, self-esteem contributes to a woman's success in college (Ossana, et al.).

A study by Moradi and Funderbank (2006) recently examined the role of social support and empowerment (or positive self-appraisal) as it moderates the relationship between negative mental health consequences of women and experiences of sexist events. Additionally, this article specifically examined this relationship within a population of women who are currently seeking counseling, adding important information to the current body of literature for counselors as it can inform more closely the role of this phenomenon within the client base. Social support has been found consistently to aid in positive mental health (Moradi & Funderbank), though it had never previously been studied in relationship to the specific stressor of sexism. It also has been found to be linked to a positive self-appraisal, indicating the literature on resiliency and self-esteem may also be applicable. The literature specifically notes that perceptions of social support are more indicative of reducing psychological distress and promoting a positive self-appraisal than received social support (Moradi & Funderbank). The findings of this study indicated that "when empowerment and self-esteem were examined concomitantly as mediators of the social support-distress relation, empowerment but not self-esteem emerged as the significant mediator of this link" (Moradi & Funderbank, p. 470). This finding specifically supports the use of a feminist framework in counseling work with women (Moradi & Funderbank). Though the study did not support the role of social support as a moderator between sexism and distress, the authors suggest that future study could examine the role of sexism-specific social support and sexist events because the

literature to date supports the notion that the role of social support is greater when the type of support matches the type of distress.

Additionally, feminist identity has been measured in different studies to learn more about how women might use feminism to protect themselves from the harmful mental health effects of sexism (Moradi & Subich, 2002; Sabik & Tylka, 2006; Swim et al., 2001). Central to this research, is the idea that the ability and proclivity to recognize sexism could possibly protect women from the harmful distress associated with experiences of sexism (Moradi & Subich). Women who reported no discrimination were found to also report that if treated unfairly, they would be likely to accept unfair treatment as a part of life (Moradi & Subich). These same women also had higher rates of high blood pressure than women who reported experiences of sexism (Moradi & Subich).

This above study highlights the importance of being able to accurately label sexism when it occurs, because women who report that they have not experienced discrimination most likely did experience subtle forms, but were unable to identify it, and therefore still suffered physical consequences. Women who self-report as feminists have been found to be more likely to identify more subtle forms of sexual harassment as such, instead of dismissing it as irrelevant (Moradi & Subich, 2002). Women have also reported feminism as a general coping mechanism by over 75% of one sample, and 81% of that same sample said that it helped them to deal with discrimination (Moradi & Subich; Sabik & Tylka, 2006). In a study by Stein and Weston (1982) women scored higher on identity achievement as well as vocational achievement when they also expressed liberal (as opposed to traditional) attitudes towards women (as cited in Moradi & Subich). It is unclear, according to the literature, what aspects of feminism provide

protection (Moradi & Subich; Sabik & Tylka). Indicated in the literature is that feminist identity may serve as a moderator between experiences of sexist events and psychological symptoms (Moradi & Subich). When feminist identity was measured using a single item (whether or not the participant self-labels as a feminist), no significant difference was found in overall symptoms, lending support for the idea of a more complex multidimensional measure of feminist identity (Moradi & Subich). If feminism is potentially a protective factor for women, then it is important to recognize that very traditional women (who are less likely to apply the label) may be at greater risk for negative effects from sexist experiences. To this point, the review of the literature has established the role of sexism in women's lives, the psychological impact, and potential moderators or protective variables. Another major theme in the literature on how this gender system impacts women's experiences is found in the ways women perceive intimate relationships and subsequently, how their behaviors in intimate relationships differ from men's.

Gender Roles and Relationship Quality

The literature indicates that gender socialization promotes differences for women's experiences in relationships, in particular, the importance that they place upon attaching to a partner and the subsequent success in relationships (Atwood, 2001; Owen-Blakemore, et al., 2005; Simon, et al., 1992; Sue & Sue, 2003). Many gender differences have been found in various studies throughout the literature, the most relevant of which will be described here. Remen and Chambless (2001) report that women have been found to employ a set of idealized behaviors in order to ameliorate relationship distress. This interaction pattern exemplifies that women may be willing to sacrifice their desires and

wishes in order to maintain a relationship; however, when mutuality and authenticity are sacrificed, dissatisfaction for women may result (Remen & Chambless). Another striking gender difference is that women have been found to identify their own behaviors as the cause for relationship problems instead of their partners (Remen & Chambless), which emphasizes the responsibility that women feel toward the success of intimate relationships (Sue & Sue).

In addition to the importance women place on relationships, men and women also have been found to express love differently, preferring stereotypically gendered means of communicating their feelings (e.g. wives choose emotional closeness and verbal expression and husbands choose sexual and instrumental means). Future plans and expectations can also be impacted by how men and women believe that they should behave (according to their gender role expectations) in a romantic relationship (Sakalli-Ugurlu, 2003). In order to maintain high levels of relationship satisfaction, men and women may need to be willing to lower or alter their relationship expectations once the "honeymoon" period is over (Sabatelli, 1988). This may be especially difficult for women, who have idealized visions of their relationships. In addition to relationship expectations that are the result of gender socialization affecting marital quality, sex-role attitudes have also been found to play a role.

Compatibility between sex-role attitudes has been found in some studies to be related to marital adjustment; however the literature has provided inconsistent evidence for whether traditional or modern roles are related to greater satisfaction or if sex-role attitudes, behaviors, and marital adjustment are linked (McGovern & Meyers, 2002). Changes in gender roles affect many areas of an individual's life, but intimate

relationships are one of the primary arenas affected (Yakushko, 2005). Amato and Booth (1995) found that when wives become more modern in their sex roles (i.e. wanting shared roles and a more egalitarian relationship) that they became less satisfied in their relationship, but when men became more modern, their satisfaction increased. The authors argue that this can be explained, at least in part, by the idea that women who want their relationships to be more egalitarian, but their husbands are more in favor of tradition may perceive themselves as disadvantaged, demand more decision-making power or that their husbands share more in household responsibilities, which may in turn increase their conflict in the relationship. This assertion is supported by the findings of another study, which examined sex role congruency and found that the combination that found the most dissatisfaction were a traditional husband with a modern wife (Bowen & Orthner, 1983). Similarly, in a study by McGovern and Meyers, marital adjustment was not found to relate to the performance of traditionally female tasks by women, but when traditionally male tasks were performed by men, it was related to increased marital adjustment. This highlights that women's satisfaction in relationships is tied not only to their own attitudes about their sex role, but also their husband's. As has been described previously, the messages women receive from others can be especially important in how they behave in relationships. In a study by Vanyperen and Buunk (1991), women with more traditional sex roles were found to be more likely to base their relationship satisfaction on how they perceived they compared with other women in similar relationships. However, women with more egalitarian roles were more likely to compare themselves to their partner (i.e. how both share roles) instead of to a same-sex other when they perceive that they should enjoy an equal status. This study also replicated the finding that women with egalitarian

attitudes were less likely to be satisfied (Vanyperen & Buunk). These findings suggest a relationship between experiences of inequality and relationship satisfaction. Many of the studies investigating this to date, have focused on studying couples together, and the literature suggests that it might be beneficial to study men and women separately (McGovern & Meyers). Socialization into particular sex roles starts at an early age. Researchers agree that gendered knowledge is passed on from an early age and is seen easily in the differently gendered activities of childhood playgroups (Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin, 1999). Though this socialization begins at an early age, developmentally, the time for which this gendered knowledge is applied most readily to intimate relationships is seen in adolescence (Simon, et al., 1992).

Gender Role Socialization and Development

Adolescence marks the time for many women when preoccupation with love finds its roots (Simon, et al., 1992). During this time, girls not only begin to develop romantic interests and relationships, but they replace their earlier focus on academics and athletics with being popular, liked, and attractive (Simon, et al.). Peer groups (primarily female friendships) serve as the primary means, during adolescence, for which feeling norms and the cultural ideology of love are strongly promoted (Simon, et al.). Feeling norms serve as a guide for which romantic feelings and behaviors are culturally sanctioned and which ones are not (Simon, et al.). Peer groups draw from the larger cultural setting (e.g. messages available in the media) in order to determine what norms are promoted (Simon, et al.). Social status and popularity are increased by adherence to norms, and rewards are given to girls who succeed (i.e. obtaining a boyfriend within the parameters of acceptable choices makes one appear more attractive to their peer group) (Simon, et al.). Feeling

norms are learned social norms that govern how one should feel and behave in and about romantic relationships (e.g. not falling in love with someone who is already attached) (Simon, et al.). The feeling norms that girls pass on through their peer group include the relative importance of love to other aspects of a girl's life, heterosexuality, monogamy, and exclusivity (Simon, et al.). These feeling norms are related to gender socialization and explain why women have been found to be more likely than men to evoke or suppress emotions in order to meet the expectations passed on through feeling norms (Simon, et al.).

According to the Broad and Narrow Theory of Socialization, there are seven main sources of socialization (which encompasses gender socialization) including "family, peers, school, community, the media, the legal system, and the cultural belief system", which are the primary means by which an individual adopts the values and beliefs of her/his culture (Arnett, 1995, p. 523). In addition to their peer groups, girls obtain particular information about their role in society by seeing how media portrays women as well as how often they are portrayed (Signorielli, 1997). A significant difference in how the two genders are portrayed in the media is seen through the messages that relationships are more important for women, whereas career and success are more important to men (Signorielli). Atwood (2001) asserts that sexual inequality has not been overcome through the women's liberation movement and still exists within marriages and in how parents treat their sons and daughters differently.

Though some families perceive themselves as equitable with children of different genders, their actual behaviors do not back up their claims (Atwood, 2001). Additionally she describes how the family of origin makes up one aspect of a gender role socialization,

within which gender bias continues to thrive (Atwood). In particular, Atwood found in her study that girls are still subjected to bias such as devaluation (that as a girl she is valued less in the family than her brother), abuse without redress (when girls are abused by brothers, they feel as though they have no recourse), and deprivation (girls receiving less resources than her brother). Other studies have shown that girls are criticized and interrupted more than their brothers, they experience less independence than brothers, parents respond to their sexuality more negatively, and they are given more household responsibilities than boys (Atwood). Differential treatment occurring in the family of origin socializes women to the role they will assume as adults. When women experience this differential treatment, it impacts how they perceive what their own role will be in their future relationships (Atwood). Being treated as "inferior" in their family of origin sends the message that her needs are less important than her male counterpart, and this belief is often carried forward into her adult relationships (Atwood, p. 24). In the study by Atwood, she argues that few households are without gender bias, though it is more likely to have been in more subtle forms than the abuse that the women she surveyed described. However, this study's highlight is phenomenological, and shows the ways gender bias can contribute to the detriment of girls and women (Atwood). A large number of women experience abuse as adults as well, which can highlight one of the various ways that a gendered system can impact women in adult relationships. To further explore this, a small discussion on domestic violence and gender role socialization follows.

Domestic Violence and Gender Role Socialization

The most salient example of women placing more importance on intimate relationships than do men (Atwood, 2001; Owen-Blakemore, et al., 2005; Simon, et al.,

1992; Sue & Sue, 2003) is seen in cases of domestic violence, where women are not getting their personal needs met, and yet still feel responsible for the success of the relationship (Ball & Wyman, 1977; D'Ardenne & Balakrishna, 2001). Domestic violence can include a wide range of behaviors including physical violence, verbal abuse, sexual violence, and emotional or psychological abuse (Mehrotra, 1999). In abusive relationships, women often blame themselves for the violence, believing that if they were better wives, their partners would be able to love them more and would not perpetrate violence against them (Ball & Wyman, 1977; D'Ardenne & Balakrishna). These beliefs link directly to the gender socialization they receive to feel responsible for the success of the relationship and that also encourages them to try to succeed even at the detriment of their own needs. Additionally, domestic violence represents a social phenomenon, which has its roots in a sexist culture (Mehrotra). The sexist culture of this society provides the backbone for differential gender socialization.

To better explain this social phenomenon, a brief overview of the occurrence of domestic violence follows. Approximately 4.8 million women are raped or physically assaulted by intimate partners on an annual basis (U.S. Department of Justice, 2000). Though domestic violence befalls individuals across all ethnic and socioeconomic groups, and occurs within both homosexual and heterosexual relationships; male-to-female violence presents more repeatedly and more often results in injury or death (Kasturirangan & Williams, 2003; Mehrotra, 1999; Tilley & Brackley, 2004). In 1996, approximately 1,800 murders were directly attributed to intimates; nearly three out of four of these had a female victim (U.S. Department of Justice, 1998). Ninety to ninety-five percent of all domestic violence victims are women (reported cases of violence only)

(Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1994). Violence against women also occurs in 20% of unmarried, dating couples (American Psychological Association, 1996). It is hard to determine the actual number of women who are victims of domestic violence due to the culture of silence surrounding the issue and the lack of systematic reporting (Lutenbacher, Cohen, & Mitzel, 2003). To exemplify, when reviewing recent literature of the incidence of women in battering relationships, figures between 2.5 and 6 million women each year can be found (d'Ardenne & Balakrishna, 2001; Lutenbacher, et al., 2003; Murdaugh, Hunt, Sowell, & Santana, 2004; Tilley & Brackley).

Despite the pervasiveness of the problem, domestic violence was recognized as a social problem only about 25 years ago (Mehrotra, 1999). Some have argued that American society has historically tolerated and even encouraged violence against women (Walker, 1978). In order to define domestic violence as a social problem, it had to be seen as morally unacceptable, the victims must be seen as helpless, and public support must be needed (Mehrotra). Feminist theorists attribute the phenomenon of male-to-female violence within the context of the romantic relationship to "historical traditions of the patriarchal family structure, contemporary constructions of masculinity and femininity, and structural constraints that make escape difficult for women who are systematically beaten" (Johnson, 1995, p.284). Though domestic violence is certainly not the norm or standard experience women have in heterosexual intimate relationships, it represents an extreme outcome of sexism that many women still do experience. In examining how most men and women experience relationships differently, however, a large difference can be seen in examining their attitudes and beliefs about marriage.

Gender Role Socialization and the Drive to Marry

The literature provides evidence that women place more importance on intimate relationships than do men (Atwood, 2001; Owen-Blakemore, et al., 2005; Simon, et al., 1992; Sue & Sue, 2003). This is especially evident when examining the drive to marry. Though both women and men are viewed more favorably by their peers when they are married, and both value marriage, women receive more pressure to do so and are more willing to self-sacrifice in order to achieve the goal of marriage (Owen-Blakemore, et al.). Women report receiving more pressure from family and their peers to get married, which they are at least in part more likely to receive because the cultural norm for women to get married and have children within the parameters of their biological or reproductive clocks (Owen-Blakemore, et al.). Additionally, women feel pressure to get married because they believe that women who have not married by a certain time are perceived as somehow deficient (Owen-Blakemore, et al.). Some also argue that women feel pressure to marry in order to gain a sense of personal safety (Owen-Blakemore, et al.). Women are also more likely to place a higher value on their future role as parents than do men as well, which could be at least partially explained by the greater role most women play in raising children (Owen-Blakemore, et al.). Due to this, women are more likely to plan for extended work interruptions to stay home and care for a newborn or infant (Owen-Blakemore, et al.). Additionally, women are more likely than men to be willing to move in order to advance their spouse's career. The majority of women still use or plan to take their husband's last name and use the title "Mrs." (Owen-Blakemore, et al.). The title "Mrs." indicates their marital status to others, and is preferred over "Ms.," which is a more neutral indicator. Similarly, many young women still prefer the title "Miss" to

indicate that they are single over the use of a neutral title. Women who adopt their husband's surnames differ from women who keep their birth name after marriage in that they are more traditional, their roles as wives and mothers are more central to their identity, and they are less concerned with equal status and roles in their relationships (Owen-Blakemore, et al.). Contrastingly, women who keep their birth names are more likely to identify as feminists, want equal status and roles in their relationships, and their professional identities are more central to their identities (Owen-Blakemore, et al.). Both groups of women, however, value marriage and experience the same levels of satisfaction (Owen-Blakemore, et al.).

Many factors contribute to how women experience quality in relationships. Up to this point, the literature review has examined what sexism is, how it negatively impacts women's mental health, and how gender role socialization creates different perceptions of intimate relationships for women, and how women behave differently than men in relationships. An area that had not been studied previously, however, is how experiences of sexism and women's own hostile and benevolent sexist beliefs relate to how satisfying heterosexual relationships are for women. The literature review so far has established that intimate relationships are exceptionally important in women's lives. What follows now is a discussion of relationship quality, its relative importance in the lives of women, and the call to investigate how sexism may impact it.

Relationship Quality

Love is considered an important emotion in American society (Simon, et al., 1992), and intimate relationships represent an important need for both women and men

(Yakushko, 2005). Satisfaction in relationships has been defined as "an intrapersonal evaluation of the positivity of feelings for one's partner and attraction to the relationship (Sakalli-Ugurlu, 2003, p. 294). Positivity of feelings for one's partner is one aspect of relationship quality that will be discussed in this study. Relationship quality encompasses perceived social support from the relationship under examination, the extent of conflict or ambivalence in the relationship, and perceptions of how positive, important, and secure the relationship is (Verhofstadt, et al., 2006). Mental health and psychological adjustment are impacted directly by the role of intimate relationships in the lives of men and women (Yakushko). "Satisfying relationships have been described as key components of happiness and meaning of life" (Yakushko, p.590). When intimate relationships experience problems they can impact a person's mental health and functioning. The DSM-IV-TR classifies "Partner Relational Problem" as "a pattern of interaction between spouses or partners characterized by negative communication (e.g., criticisms), distorted communications (e.g., unrealistic expectations), or noncommunication (e.g., withdrawal) that is associated with clinically significant impairment in individual or family functioning or the development of symptoms in one or both partners" (p. 737). Furthermore, the DSM-IV-TR acknowledges the frequency of Relational Problems as the focus of clinical attention. In the defining characteristics of "Partner Relational Problem", there is a specific note of the potential for the development of other clinically relevant symptoms as a result, which highlights the importance of healthy relationship functioning to the individual's mental well-being (DSM-IV-TR). For married individuals, spousal support is an important source of social support, and social support has been found to be particularly important for people confronted with particular stressors (Tolpin, et al., 2006;

Verhofstadt, et al., 2006). Though relationships can provide support, relationships can also be unsatisfying and full of daily conflict (Tolpin, et al.). Problems in intimate relationships have been found consistently to impact the individual more significantly (e.g., the development of other psychological symptoms) than other close relationships (Snyder, et al., 2005).

In the United States, the divorce rate remains at approximately 50%, which suggests the high occurrence rates of relationship problems in people's lives (Snyder, et al., 2005). Even when divorce is not sought, many marriages experience turbulence, risk of dissolution, and symptom development for one or both partners (Snyder, et al.). Problems in intimate relationships have been found to be prevalent in community and treatment samples (Snyder, et al.). A quarter of a century ago, approximately half of all married individuals reported being "very happy", and today that number has decreased to one-third (Snyder, et al.). Another indicator of the prevalence of relationship problems is seen in the findings that 37% of men (ages 50 to 59) and 20% women (ages 40-49) have admitted to having at least one extra-marital affair (Snyder, et al.). In a national study, relationship problems including divorce, separation, and marital strain, were found to be the number one indicator of acute emotional stress for individuals (Snyder, et al.). Marital problems remain the number one reason individuals and couples seek therapy (Snyder, et al.). Additionally, marital problems are prevalent in individuals seeking therapy as secondary concerns as well (Snyder, et al.). In order to more fully understand the impact of relationship dissatisfaction, it is important to understand how other mental health symptoms may develop. What follows is an investigation into the most salient link in the literature, which is the link between relationship dissatisfaction and depression. In

examining this link, one can see how women, in particular, experience problems resulting from relationship dissatisfaction differently than their male counterparts.

Relationship Dissatisfaction and Depression

When relationship problems result in symptom development, those symptoms are usually affective (e.g. depression and/or anxiety) (Snyder, et al., 2005). The link between depressive symptoms and relationship problems is particularly strong and has been consistently found in the research (Remen & Chambless, 2001). One study showed a rate of 50% of at least one partner being depressed when a couple sought marital counseling (Remen & Chambless). The causal direction between depression and relationship problems has not been clearly determined. Some studies showed that initial marital dissatisfaction are related to an increase in later incidence of major depressive episodes, while others have found the reverse to be true (Remen & Chambless). These mixed findings have been partially explained by gender differences.

Though relationship success is important for both women and men, gender differences have been found in the ways in which men and women experience intimate relationships and relationship problems. Overall these gender differences suggest that women place more importance on the success of intimate relationships, and therefore are more likely to receive negative implications when relationships experience problems or fail (Remen & Chambless, 2001). When investigating depression and relationship satisfaction, one replication study by Remen and Chambless found that there were gender differences in the causal direction of the link between depression and relationship functioning. Previous to this study, the causal direction between depression and relationship functioning has been unclear because of mixed findings. This study looked at

college students, furthering previous research of a community sample of married couples, and found that only in women did dissatisfaction in romantic relationships predict later depressive symptoms (Remen & Chambless). This study also found that initial depression was a significant predictor for the development of relationship problems later on for both genders, suggesting that once a person becomes depressed, it has serious negative implications for relationships (Remen & Chambless). The researchers purport that these findings may indicate that even modest levels of dissatisfaction in relationships may predict mood changes for women (Remen & Chambless). Additionally, the population under examination in this study was college students instead of a community sample of married women as in the previous work; therefore it was unlikely that problems such as "economic uncertainty, social isolation, and childcare availability" were to blame for the gender differences (Remen & Chambless, p. 57). The authors argue that the most likely explanation for their findings given the characteristics of the sample are "developmental differences in the socialization of men and women" (Remen & Chambless, p. 57). This study points directly to the need for further investigation into the nature of how women are socialized to engage in relationships differently from their male counterparts.

Depression, whether it is the result of relationship dissatisfaction or the cause of it, has significant negative implications for relationships (Remen & Chambless, 2001, p. 57). Couples within which one or both partners are depressed are characterized by increased tension and hostility, which in turn negatively impacts the relationship (Remen & Chambless). Coyen's interactional model suggests that this relationship between depression and relationship satisfaction interacts to form a negative feedback loop (Remen & Chambless). A depressed mood creates fewer positive interactions, which

increases the likelihood of rejection, and therefore contributes to maintenance of the depression (Remen & Chambless). A second model, the marital discord model of depression, argues that discordant relationships increases stressors and decreases support, which contributes to depression (Remen & Chambless). The marital discord model of depression purports that marital discord may be related to an increase in marital stressors and a decrease in marital support, which then influences the development and maintenance of depression in vulnerable individuals (Tolpin, et al., 2006). According to Tolpin, et al., depressed individuals are more likely than non-depressed individuals to embed more negative meaning into stressful events, which could result in dramatic decreases in their mood. Distressed couples are also likely to experience a heightened reactivity to relationship stressors, which in turn results in reports of more negative experiences within the relationship (Tolpin, et al.). These two models exemplify the debate over the causal link between relationship problems and depression, with the former pointing to depression resulting in relationship problems and the latter, the opposite direction.

The literature explains, however, that it is more likely in women than men for relationship problems to result in later symptom development (Remen & Chambless, 2001). Two particular theories attempt to explain this phenomenon: self-in-relation theory (Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Striver & Surry, 1991 as cited in Remen & Chambless) and silencing the self (Jack, 1991 as cited in Remen & Chambless). Both theories agree with the premise that women have a heightened sensitivity to problems within the relationship (Remen & Chambless), which points to the differences in their gender socialization. Both theories also argue that women may develop depression in response to

being prevented from developing authenticity and mutuality in romantic relationships (Remen & Chambless), again pointing to their gender socialization. According to the self-in-relation theory, women form their identity through the formation of a nurturing and on-going relationship with their mothers, whereas men form their identity from "separating from their mothers and identifying with their fathers", which emphasizes the relative importance of interconnectedness for females (Remen & Chambless, p. 47). In the silencing the self theory, women learn behaviors of suppressing conflicting ideas, beliefs, and feelings in order to avoid conflict within their relationships (Remen & Chambless). Both theories highlight important aspects of how some aspect of gender socialization may impact women's drive to succeed in relationships.

Because the dominant culture is steeped in sexism, ideological beliefs about love are passed on and conform to gendered beliefs. Love is defined through this set of ideological beliefs and is defined by the culture within which they exist (Simon, et al., 1992). These ideological beliefs have changed over time due to the structural transformation of the family and economy from "social commitment, self-sacrifice, and dependence" to the more modern beliefs of "individualism, self-actualization, and independence" (Simon, et al., p. 29). Despite the changes in love ideology over time, some things remain such as the norm that encourages women to be preoccupied with love and intimate relationships and the idea that men should value occupational achievement over romantic love for self-actualization (Simon, et al.). Feeling norms emerge by the seventh or eighth grade, though some are more developed than others at that stage of development (Simon, et al.). Peer groups provide the primary means for the development

of feeling norms during adolescence; however, there are many forms of gender socialization that reinforce gender differences within society.

The literature to this point has established that sexism impacts women's mental health negatively; that gender role socialization, which is a component of sexism, impacts how women perceive relationships and behave in relationships differently than their male counterparts; and that satisfying intimate relationships are an important component of mental health. Women have been found to not only experience relationships differently, but these differences can also result in more serious consequences for women when symptom development results. There was a paucity of research into the relationship between experiences of sexism, sexist attitudes, and relationship quality that this study has explored. To further this discussion, a review of the relevant measures will be discussed below.

Measures

The central concept of Glick and Fiske's (1997) Ambivalent Sexism Theory is that benevolent sexism is a component of how men maintain the status quo of patriarchy given that they are in intimate contact with women (i.e., women serving the role of wives, mothers, daughters, girlfriends, etc.). The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI), which was created out of Ambivalent Sexism Theory, lends itself particularly well to measuring how sexist attitudes affect heterosexual romantic relationships (Glick & Fiske). One potential area for future research that the authors point to is "how and when women may elicit either protectiveness and intimacy-seeking or hostile affect and malicious discrimination on the part of men" (Glick & Fiske, p. 132). The authors also suggest that

the measure could be used to understand men's sexist beliefs and attitudes more fully, especially, "illuminate the underlying motivations (need for power, gender differentiation, and sexual contact) that animate men's thoughts, feelings, and behavior toward women" (Glick & Fiske, p. 132). Glick and Fiske did not focus on the use of the ASI to determine the relationship between sexism and relationship quality, however, this research focus fits within the broader scope of their recommendations. Yakushko (2005) asserts that one of the primary arenas influenced by gender roles are romantic relationships.

One study used the ASI to examine the relationship between Ambivalent Sexism and relationship patterns among women and men in the Ukraine (Yakushko). This study found that benevolent and hostile sexist attitudes of women and men related significantly to negative attitudes in their heterosexual relationships, such as fear of intimacy and anxious or avoidant attachment styles (Yakushko). The authors assert that for men, "prejudicial and sexist views about gender roles may carry negative repercussions for their ability to establish satisfying heterosexual relationships" (Yakushko, p. 594). Another study by Mesenas (1993) as cited by Pei-Hui and Ward (1995) found that femininity has been found to influence relationship satisfaction. These studies provide strong support for the investigation into the relationship between sexist attitudes and relationship quality. Though the literature leads to particular conclusions about the relationship of experiences in sexism and sexist attitudes to relationship quality, the purpose of this research was to substantiate or refute these claims empirically.

The literature has shown that sexist discrimination is widespread in women's lives (Klonoff & Landrine, 1995). These experiences include a wide range of events,

including, but not limited to: being ignored because of gender, sexual harassment, being called sexist names, and unequal treatment in the family, intimate relationships, employment, housing, health, and social services (Klonoff & Landrine). The Schedule of Sexist Events was developed in order to assess the occurrence of sexist discrimination in women's lives (Klonoff & Landrine). The measure contains four factors: Sexist Degradation, Sexism in Distant Relationships, Sexism in Close Relationships, and Sexist Discrimination in the Workplace (Klonoff & Landrine). It was created to measure "gender-specific, negative life events as … gender specific stressors" (Klonoff & Landrine, p. 441). By conceptualizing them as stressors, theoretically, they follow the stress research models, and events can be categorized as acute ("recent") or chronic ("lifetime") (Klonoff & Landrine). It also, then follows the domains of stressors, for example, gender-specific stressors at work or in intimate relationships (Klonoff & Landrine). Similarly, coping styles and skills and other factors may similarly moderate the impact of sexist events as is found with everyday stressors, such as social support and hardiness. However, unlike generic life stressors, sexist events are hypothesized to impact women's mental and physical health in a greater capacity, because these attacks are highly personal; they are demeaning, and degrading events that attack the essence of a person that cannot be changed (i.e. being a woman) (Klonoff & Landrine). Also unlike generic stressors, feminist consciousness may moderate effects, by giving women a means of understanding and responding to sexist events.

There is debate in the literature about how to assess relationship satisfaction or quality (Vaughn & Matyastik Baier, 1999). Many agree that central to defining relationship satisfaction is in assessing both attitudes and behaviors (Vaughn & Matyastik

Baier). One way that relationship satisfaction has been defined is through social exchange theory, which postulates that if the benefits of the relationship outweigh the costs, then the relationship will be evaluated as satisfactory (Vaughn & Matyastik Baier). In determining predictors of marital quality, studies coming from the social exchange perspective have assessed equality in the relationship. For example, couples report high levels of relationship satisfaction also perceive their relationships as more egalitarian (Ptacek & Dodge, 1995 as cited in Vaughn & Matyastik Baier; Sprecher, 2001). Among the many links found in the literature, relationship satisfaction has been linked to "commitment, rewards, costs, relationship stability, perceived relationship alternatives, time spent together, power, and future time orientation" (Sakalli-Ugurlu, 2003; Sanderson & Kurdek, 1993). The Quality of Relationships Inventory (QRI), which consists of three scales (Support, Conflict, and Depth) measures perceived social support from the relationship under examination, the extent of conflict or ambivalence in the relationship, and perceptions of how positive, important, and secure the relationship is (Verhofstadt, et al, 2006.). For the purpose of this study, the Conflict Scale was used to measure Relationship Quality.

Summary

Relationship quality is an important component to mental health for all individuals. Women, however, experience relationships differently due to the process of gender socialization, by which they adopt feeling norms, roles, and expectations for intimate relationships. Gender socialization is the means through which the ideology of sexism is passed on to members of a given culture. Sexism has been found to have

negative mental and physical health implications for women. Ambivalent Sexism in particular describes how women and men live in intimate connection without always endorsing or practicing hostile aspects of sexism. Due to the intimate connection of men and women, in particular in intimate relationships, the role of sexism is particularly relevant. This study adds to the body of literature informing counseling practice with women seeking services for relationship problems through investigating the relationship between experiences of sexism and benevolent and hostile sexist beliefs and relationship quality. This investigation will aid counselors in understanding how cultural and social issues (i.e., sexism) impact particular areas of women's lives (i.e., intimate relationships).

III. METHODOLOGY

This chapter will discuss the research methodology and design that was utilized in this study. This study investigated the relationship between Experiences of Sexism, Hostile and Benevolent sexist beliefs, and Relationship Quality. This chapter will also review the research questions, participants, data collection, instruments, and research procedures. The hypotheses this study investigated are as follows:

Research Hypotheses

1. There is a statistically significant relationship between women's relationship quality and benevolent sexist beliefs.
2. There is a statistically significant relationship between women's relationship quality and hostile sexist beliefs.
3. There is a statistically significant relationship between women's relationship quality and number of experiences of sexist events.
4. One variable: benevolent sexist beliefs, hostile sexist beliefs, or number of experiences of sexist events, will more strongly relate to women's relationship quality than the other variables.

5. The interaction between women's hostile and benevolent sexist beliefs and their experiences of sexism will have a unique relationship with relationship quality.

Participants

A non-random sample of women currently involved in a heterosexual relationship, ages 19 and above, and who are enrolled in study at a large southeastern University were sought for participation in this study. Women in heterosexual relationships only were used for this study because a same-sex partner might provide a different type of support from negative gender related events (sexism) than a male partner might provide. Additionally, the literature on how gender socialization has impacted women's roles in relationships has focused on heterosexual relationships, and may not be generalizable to same-sex relationships. Participants recruited for this study included both undergraduate and graduate students. Participants were recruited from undergraduate courses in Foundations of Education, Human Development and Family Sciences, Nutrition and Food Sciences, Women's Studies, and graduate courses in Counseling, Educational Media, Human Development and Family Sciences, and Pharmacy Care Systems at a large, Southeastern University. Students were asked to volunteer if they wished to participate. Given the number of factors involved in this study, a sample size of 99 was sufficient to run the analysis. Students were informed that participation was voluntary. Students were also informed that extra credit would not be provided for those who chose to participate. On a separate demographic questionnaire, students were asked to indicate their gender and age, whether or not they are currently involved in a

heterosexual relationship, whether or not they are currently in a relationship, how long they have been in their current relationship, whether or not they are co-habiting and/or married, and to complete three other questionnaires.

Instruments

Demographic Questionnaire

A separate sheet, asking demographic questions, was created for use in this study. This questionnaire asked participants to indicate their gender and age, whether or not they are heterosexual, whether or not they are currently in a relationship, how long they have been in their current relationship, and whether or not they are cohabiting and/or married. The questions of gender and whether or not they are in a current relationship were asked to ensure that those participating in the study met the criteria for participation. The remaining information reported in the demographic questionnaire was used during data analysis to explore possible confounding influences. Length of the relationship was investigated to determine possible confounding influences related to the length of the relationship, such as a "honeymoon phase".

Quality of Relationships Inventory (QRI)

The Quality of Relationships Inventory (QRI) was developed by Pierce, Sarason, and Sarason (1991) to asses perceptions of available social support from specific relationships. The measure was initially created to assess the relationships of friends, romantic partners, and mothers and fathers of a child (Pierce, et al., 1991). In the first study, however, sufficient numbers were not obtained in order to confirm the three factor structure of the measure on intimate relationships, but this was done in a later study

(Verhofstadt, et al., 2006). Despite the fact that it has not been used as long as many other relationship quality or social support measures, it has been widely used since its creation and has proven useful in both clinical and non-clinical samples (Verhofstadt, et al.).

The QRI consists of 25 items, scored on a 4-point Likert rating scale (Rostosky, Galliher, Welsh, & Kawaguchi, 2000). Answers to each item are as follows: 1 = not at all, 2 = a little, 3 = quite a bit, 4 = very much. The measure assesses "(a) Support (i.e., the perceived availability of social support from specific relationships, (b) Conflict (i.e., the extent to which the relationship is a source of conflict and ambivalence) and (c) Depth (i.e., the extent to which the relationship is perceived as being positive, important, and secure)" (Verhofstadt, et al., p.15). The QRI has three subscales with the following number of items for each scale: The Support Subscale (7 items), The Depth Scale (6 items), and The Conflict Scale (12 items). The three scales measure factors that have been found to be distinct but closely related (Verhofstadt, et al.). The measure is scored by averaging scores of each item from each scale, and it therefore produces three scores (Verhofstadt, et al.). It is a self-report measure that can be administered in paper and pencil form. Scoring results in an average of total scores, ranging from 1-4 (Verhofstadt, et al.). Means for each score were found for women scoring their intimate relationships as follows: Support: 3.31, Conflict: 1.94, and Depth: 3.41. In this study, only the Conflict Scale was used. Scoring is conducted through averaging items 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 14, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, and 25. Higher scores indicate higher perceptions of conflict, whereas lower scores indicate lower perceptions of conflict in the relationship.

Reliability was found with the following alpha coefficients for each of the following scales: Support: .83, Conflict: .88, and Depth: .83 for relationships with

mothers, Support: .88, Conflict:.88, and Depth: .86 for relationships with fathers, and Support: .85, Conflict:.91, and Depth: .84 for relationships with friends (Pierce, et al., 1991). Internal consistency was found for romantic relationships for women at the .80, .88, and .80 levels for Support, Conflict, and Depth respectively and for men at the .79, .87, and .81 levels (Verhofstadt, 2006). Positive correlations were found between support and depth factors, negative correlations were found for conflict and support and also for conflict and depth (Pierce et al.; Verhofstadt, et al.). Predictive validity was established for mother, father, and friend relationships through a series of hierarchical multiple regression analyses, in which perceived available support from specific relationships was able to predict loneliness (Pierce, et al.). Discriminant validity was also found for mother, and father for the QRI scales as being able to measure distinct aspects of specific relationships, when correlations were run with the Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI) (Pierce, et al). Additionally, the QRI Support Scale was consistently found to be related to other perceived support scales (Pierce, et al.).

Schedule of Sexist Events (SSE)

The SSE was developed to assess women's experiences of sexist events that occur daily or on a routine basis (Moradi & Subich, 2002). It is a 20-item measure that focuses on the frequency of experiences of sexist events that women report. Items are on a 6-point scale ("1 = the event never happened, 2 = the event happened once in a while (less than 10% of the time), 3 = the event happened sometimes (10-25% of the time), 4 = the event happened a lot (26-49% of the time), 5 = the event happened most of the time (50-70% of the time), and 6 = the event happened almost all of the time (more than 70% of the time") (Moradi & Subich, p. 52). Participants can complete each item twice in order

to assess perceptions of sexist events in the respondent's lifetime and then in the past year. Scores range from 20 to 120, with higher scores reflecting frequent perceptions of sexist events.

Both the SSE-Lifetime and SSE-Recent scales, as well as their factors, exhibited generally adequate internal consistency reliability (Klonoff & Landrine, 1995). Total SSE-Lifetime scores have a reported Chronbach's alpha of .92 and a split-half reliability of .87 (Klonoff & Landrine). Total SSE-Recent Scores have a reported Chronbach's alpha of .90 and a split-half reliability of .83 (Klonoff & Landrine). Internal consistency for the SSE-Lifetime factors are as follows: I-IV: .89, .82, .67, and .68 (Klonoff & Landrine). Internal consistency for the SSE-Recent factors are as follows: I-IV: .88, .74, .70, and .61 (Klonoff & Landrine). Test-retest reliability was not considered an adequate way to determine reliability for this measure because a single sexist event occurring on a particular day in a woman's life would affect her Recent and Lifetimes scores (Klonoff & Landrine). However, a preliminary analysis was run and the following scores were found: Lifetime: .70, Recent: .63 (Klonoff & Landrine). In order to assess validity, the SSE was tested against other measures of stressful events (Klonoff & Landrine). The SSE was measured against the Hassles Intensity Scale and the PERI-LES scale because of the similarity between what they assess: the frequency of stressful events (Klonoff & Landrine). Correlations were found with the Hassles Intensity Scale at the .32 level and with the PERI-LES scale at .27 (Klonoff & Landrine). Though the correlation was small, both of the above scales (Hassles Intensity Scale and the PERI-LES scale) correlated with one another as well as the SSE with both of them (Klonoff & Landrine). Both of these

scales (Hassles Intensity Scale and the PERI-LES scale) have been found to be both highly reliable and valid (Klonoff & Landrine).

Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI)

The ASI was developed by Glick and Fiske (1996) and is based on Ambivalent Sexism Theory. This measure allowed the concepts of benevolent and hostile sexism to be measured separately, unlike previous measures that did not distinguish between the two and usually focused on hostile forms of sexism. It is a 22-item self report measure. The ASI has two subscales, consisting of 11 items each. It was normed on over 2000 male and female participants, who were mainly undergraduates, and two small samples of community members.

The ASI is scored on a 6 point Likert scale, ranging from 0 to 5. Possible answers for items on the ASI are as follows: 0 = disagree strongly, 1 = disagree somewhat, 2 = disagree slightly, 3 = agree slightly, 4 = agree somewhat, 5 = agree strongly. Scoring is reversed for the following items: 3, 6, 7, 13, 18, and 21. In order to achieve scores for each scale, items on that scale are averaged. Scores higher than 2.5 are considered to be "relatively sexist" (Glick, 2007). Glick (2007) defines Benevolent Sexists (with higher than a 2.5 on the BS subscale) as individuals who embrace traditional gender roles and also hold positive feelings towards stereotypes of women. Glick (2007) also explains that Benevolent Sexists do not necessarily hold hostile attitudes towards women who do not fulfill traditional roles unless they are also Hostile Sexists. Hostile Sexists, on the other hand, are described as individuals (scoring higher than 2.5 on the HS subscale) who are likely to ascribe to negative stereotypes for women rejecting traditional roles and behaviors.

Ambivalent Sexism is scored by the average of Hostile and Benevolent Sexism scores (Glick, 2007). Ambivalent sexists are individuals who have high levels of both Hostile and Benevolent Sexism (above 2.5 on each subscale). These individuals are likely to have extreme reactions to women based on which attitudes are currently active (BS or HS). For example, they may be hostile towards a woman who succeeds in business, but reverent towards stay-at-home mothers. On the other hand, Non-Sexists are individuals who score low (below 2.5) on both the HS and BS subscales, and hold more egalitarian attitudes.

Reliability was established through analysis in six separate studies by Glick and Fiske (1996) for the total Ambivalent Sexism Inventory and ranged from: .83 to 92. For the Hostile Sexism scale the following range of reliabilities were found: .80 to .92. For the Benevolent Sexism scale the following range of reliabilities were found: .73 to .85. Evidence of discriminant validity was found for the ASI through the development of the Recognition of Discrimination (RD) factor (Glick & Fiske). A reliable RD scale was found at .77, and regression analysis was performed with Hostile Sexism and Benevolent Sexism entered as predictors (Glick & Fiske). The standardized regression coefficients for the combined regression were -.52 for Hostile Sexism, and .25 for Benevolent Sexism (Glick & Fiske).

These results are consistent with the assertion that denial of discrimination against a minority group masks an underlying hostility (Glick & Fiske). Additionally, the subjectively positive feelings that are associated with Benevolent Sexism, may lead those high in BS to be more sympathetic towards women and therefore be more aware of the difficulties they face (Glick & Fiske). The ASI was also tested for social desirability

(Glick & Fiske). ASI scales were unrelated to the Self-Deception scale of the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR), and significant but not large results were found on the Impression Management scale on both scales and the total measure (Glick & Fiske). Overall ASI scores also correlated well with four other measures of sexism, establishing validity (Glick & Fiske). However, the relationship between the ASI and other measures is wholly attributed to the HS scales, because other measures of sexism have not measured constructs similar to BS (Glick & Fiske). The overall connection between the total ASI and other measures is explained by the correlation between BS and HS, which are related concepts (Glick & Fiske). This indicates that other scales do not assess BS, which supports the development of the measure (Glick & Fiske). HS and BS are distinct, however, both are positively correlated (Glick & Fiske). Correlations were found across five samples in the following range: .37 to .74.

Procedure

Permission was sought to ask for female volunteers to participate in the study from undergraduate courses in Foundations of Education, Human Development and Family Sciences, Nutrition and Food Sciences, Women's Studies, and graduate courses in Counseling, Educational Media, Human Development and Family Sciences, and Pharmacy Care Systems at a large, Southeastern University until a sufficient number for the study to be conducted had been achieved (n = 99). Included in the study materials was information regarding the procedures and topic of the study. Participants received an informational letter regarding informed consent and demonstrated their informed consent by participating in the study from the researcher. The order of the measures administered

was counterbalanced in order to minimize the effects of possible reactivity of the order of the measures. No personal identifying information from the participants was written on the study packet materials.

Data Analysis

In order to determine if a relationship exists between relationship quality and hostile and benevolent sexism attitudes (which are encompassed within Ambivalent Sexism Theory), and perceived experiences of sexism the following measures were employed: Relationship Quality was be measured by the Quality of Relationships Inventory (QRI); Hostile and Benevolent Sexism were measured through the use of the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI); Perceived Sexist Events were be measured by the use of the Schedule of Sexist Events (SSE).

Correlations were calculated in order to determine the relationship of each descriptive variable, along with Benevolent Sexism, Hostile Sexism, Ambivalent Sexism (the combination of Benevolent and Hostile Sexism), Recent Sexist Events, and Lifetime Sexist Events with the Conflict scale of the Quality of Relationships Inventory. In order to address the research hypotheses, a multiple hierarchical regression was used. To address the first three hypotheses, Hostile Sexism, Benevolent Sexism, and Sexist Events were entered into the first step of the Regression Equation with the Quality of Relationships Inventory entered as the Dependent Variable. To address the last three research question, the following two-way interactions were entered into the second step of the Regression Equation: HS with Sexist Events, BS with Sexist Event, and BS and HS. Recent sexist events would have been used instead of Lifetime Sexist events if the

relationship between it and the Conflict scale of Relationship Quality was found to be a more salient predictor. In order to determine which was a more salient predictor, Tabachnick and Fidell's (2001) technique for computing two sets of predictors was used. A z test would have followed to determine if the difference is statistically significant. The literature indicates that Recent Events are more likely to yield significant results, however neither emerged as a more salient predictor. In the third step of the equation, a three way interaction was entered into the equation. This is the combination between Hostile and Benevolent Sexist Events and Recent Sexist events on the Conflict scale of Relationship Quality.

Summary

In this chapter, the study was described, including a discussion of participants, heterosexual women, ages 19 and above, currently involved an intimate relationship, and who are enrolled in study at a large southeastern University. The procedure and data collection methods were also discussed. Data collection was completed through the use of a demographic questionnaire, the Conflict Scale of the Quality of Relationships Inventory, the Schedule of Sexist Events, and the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory. Data analysis was also discussed.

IV. RESULTS

In this chapter results of the data analysis will be reported. This chapter includes a description of participant's demographic responses (e.g., age, length of intimate heterosexual relationships, and cohabiting status) and mean scores from each measure's scales. Additionally, correlations, reliability analysis, and regression analysis of sexist beliefs and sexist events and relationship quality are included.

Participants

Survey packets containing the Quality of Relationships inventory (QRI), the Schedule of Sexist Events (SSE), the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI), and a Demographics Questionnaire were collected from 109 female students currently involved in a heterosexual relationship enrolled in undergraduate and graduate study at a large southeastern University. The researcher asked for participation from around 800 to 900 female college students. Of those that qualified for the study and who took a packet indicating that they would be willing to participate (around 275 packets), only 109 were returned completed. One packet was not included due to the participant not fully completing all of the instruments. Three packets were excluded due to the participants not meeting the criteria for inclusion (i.e. not in an intimate heterosexual relationship). Six packets were removed from the study because they fell outside of the range of ages of

typical undergraduate and graduate students (35 years old and under). This was consistent with the literature that suggests that at different developmental stages, there are specific expectations for women regarding romantic relationships. Therefore the remaining participants' data all fall into the typical developmental ranges for traditional college-aged women. The remaining 99 participants' data were scored and included in the analysis. Some participant's had missing items, which caused certain participants to be excluded from various parts of the analyses. The lowest number achieved on any scale was the Recent Sexist Events (Recent SSE) Scale, which had 93 participants after missing data points were accounted for. The number (N) for the remaining scales and demographic data are as follows: Age (N = 99), Length of Relationship (N = 99), Cohabiting/Marital Status (N = 99), Quality of Relationships Inventory (QRI) (N = 99), Lifetime Sexist Events (Lifetime SSE) (N = 94), Hostile Sexism (HS) (N = 98), and Benevolent Sexism (BS) (N = 98). The remaining participants provided a sufficient N to run the analyses.

Participants included in the analysis were all female, ages 19 to 35, with a mean age of 21.30 years and a median of 21 years. All participants were involved in an intimate heterosexual relationship with length of time in the relationship falling between 2 weeks and 8 years, with a mean length of 2 years and .23 months and a median of 2 years. Of the 99 participants, 84 were not cohabiting or married, and 15 were either married or cohabiting with their partner. Table 1 presents means for the demographic variables.

A mean of 1.64 was found in this study for participants on the Conflict Scale. Higher scores indicate higher perceptions of conflict, whereas lower scores indicate lower perceptions of conflict in the relationship. A mean of 1.94 was found for the Conflict

Scale in the original study for women. This sample showed lower perceptions of conflict in their relationship than the original study by Pierce, Sarason, and Sarason (1991) and low perceptions of conflict in general.

A mean of 2.11 was found for Lifetime Sexist Events and 1.67 for Recent Sexist Events in this study, where "1 = the event never happened, 2 = the event happened once in a while (less than 10% of the time), 3 = the event happened sometimes (10-25% of the time), 4 = the event happened a lot (26-49% of the time), 5 = the event happened most of the time (50-70% of the time), and 6 = the event happened almost all of the time (more than 70% of the time") (Moradi & Subich, p. 52). Higher scores indicate higher perceptions of frequency of sexist experiences. In this study, scores for Lifetime and Recent Sexist Events were low, averaging near the score of 2 meaning less than 10% of the time.

In this study, a mean of 2.29 for the HS subscale and 2.62 for the BS subscale was found. Scores higher than 2.5 are considered to be "relatively sexist" (Glick, 2007). Glick (2007) defines Benevolent Sexists (with higher than a 2.5 on the BS subscale) as individuals who embrace traditional gender roles and also hold positive feelings towards stereotypes of women. Glick (2007) also explains that Benevolent Sexists do not necessarily hold hostile attitudes towards women who do not fulfill traditional roles unless they are also Hostile Sexists. Hostile Sexists, on the other hand, are described as individuals (scoring higher than 2.5 on the HS subscale) who are likely to ascribe to negative stereotypes for women rejecting traditional roles and behaviors. In this sample, participants responses showed relatively sexist scores on the BS scale, but slightly lower

than the cut-off for HS scores to be considered relatively sexist. Table 1 presents means for each of the measures.

In addition to the above demographic information, participants reported information about their quality in their intimate relationship, experiences of sexist events, and sexist beliefs. Correlations were calculated between each combination of variables in order to determine if age, length or relationship, or cohabiting/marital status influenced the results of the study. The bivariate correlations for age, length of relationship, cohabiting status, QRI, Recent SSE, Lifetime SSE, BS, and HS are reported in Table 2. As would be expected, age was positively correlated with length of relationship and cohabiting/marital status. Similarly, length of relationship was correlated positively with cohabiting/marital status. Additionally, age and length of relationship were positively correlated with Conflict in relationships, and age was correlated with HS. Also as expected, Lifetime and Recent SSE scores were correlated with one another, as were Benevolent and Hostile sexist beliefs. Quality of relationships was correlated with Lifetime and Recent SSE, not sexist beliefs. None of the demographic data (e.g., age, length of relationship, cohabiting/marital status) were found to correlate with the measures except for what was reported above. In addition to correlations, reliabilities of the QRI, SSE, and ASI are reported in Table 3.

Table 1

Mean Score for Scales

	M	SD
Demographic Data (N = 104)		
1. Age	21.30	2.35
2. Length of Relationship (years)	2.23	1.88
Quality of Relationships Inventory (N = 105)		
3. Conflict Scale	1.64	.44
Schedule of Sexist Events (Lifetime N = 100, Recent N = 99)		
4. Lifetime Sexist Events	2.11	.59
5. Recent Sexist Events	1.67	.53
Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (N = 104)		
6. Hostile Sexism	2.29	.81
7. Benevolent Sexism	2.62	.79

Note. Cohabiting/Marital Status is scored as 1 = Married/Cohabiting, 2 = not Married/Cohabiting. QRI scores ranged from 1 to 4, SSE scores ranged from 1 to 6, and ASI scores ranged from 0 to 5; for the QRI, higher scores indicate higher perceptions of conflict, for the SSE, higher scores indicates perceptions of more sexist events experienced, and for the ASI, higher scores indicates more sexist beliefs, with a cut-off of 2.5. Scores above 2.5 are considered "relatively sexist".

Table 2

Bivariate Correlations Between Age, Length of Relationship, Cohabiting/Marital Status, Quality of Relationships, Recent Experiences of Sexist Events, Lifetime Experiences of Sexist Events, Benevolent Sexist Beliefs, and Hostile Sexist Beliefs

Measure	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Demographic Data							
1. Age	.300**	-.511**	.270**	.158	.059	-.211*	-.045
2. Length of Relationship	--	-.298**	.340**	.099	-.029	.045	.029
3. Cohabiting/Marital Status	--	--	-.156	-.116	.001	.057	.105
Quality of Relationships Inventory							
4. Conflict Scale	--	--	--	.414**	.363**	.102	.124
Schedule of Sexist Events							
5. Lifetime Sexist Events	--	--	--	--	.797**	-.170	-.106
6. Recent Sexist Events	--	--	--	--	--	-.057	.069
Ambivalent Sexism Inventory							
7. Hostile Sexism	--	--	--	--	--	--	.350**
8. Benevolent Sexism	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 3

Reliability Analysis for QRI, SSE, and ASI

	Pierce, et al. (1991) Cronbach's Alpha	Current Study Cronbach's Alpha
QRI		
Conflict Scale	.88	.88
	Klonoff and Landrine (1995) Cronbach's Alpha	**Current Study Cronbach's Alpha**
SSE		
Recent Sexist Events	.90	.89
Lifetime Sexist Events	.92	.89
	Glick and Fiske (1996) Cronbach's Alpha	**Current Study Cronbach's Alpha**
ASI		
Benevolent Sexism .85, .75, .77, .78, .73, .83	.80	
Hostile Sexism .92, .87, .80, .87, .91, .89	.80	
Full Scale .92, .88, .83, .83, .87, .90	.84	

Hierarchical Regression Analysis

In this study, a hierarchical regression analysis was conducted in order to investigate whether or not a relationship exists between sexist events, sexist beliefs, and relationship quality. In the first step, this study sought to investigate whether Benevolent

Sexist Beliefs, Hostile Sexist Beliefs, and Sexist Events, each would contribute uniquely to Relationship Quality for Heterosexual Women. In the second step, this study sought to investigate whether the two-way interactions between the above variables would each contribute uniquely to Relationship Quality for Heterosexual Women. First, the study sought to investigate whether the two-way interaction between Lifetime Sexist Events and Benevolent Sexist Beliefs would contribute uniquely to Relationship Quality for Heterosexual Women. Second, the study sought to investigate whether the two-way interaction between Lifetime Sexist Events and Hostile Sexist Beliefs would contribute uniquely to Relationship Quality for Heterosexual Women. Third, the study sought to investigate whether the two-way interaction between Benevolent Sexist Beliefs and Hostile Sexist Beliefs would contribute uniquely to Relationship Quality for Heterosexual Women. In order to fully explore interaction effects, the 3-way interaction effects were also computed through the hierarchical regression analysis. The three-way interaction tested the relationship between Benevolent Sexist Beliefs, Hostile Sexist Beliefs, and Lifetime Sexist Events and Relationship Quality for Heterosexual Women. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Quality of Relationships (N = 99)

Variable	B	SE B	β
Step 1			
Benevolent Sexism (BS)	.080	.058	.137
Hostile Sexism (HS)	.078	.056	.146
Lifetime Sexist Events (Lifetime SSE)	.348	.070	.466**
Step 2			
BS X Lifetime SSE	.042	.105	.051
HS X Lifetime SSE	.050	.112	.059
HS X BS	.036	.073	.053
Step 3			
HS X BS X Lifetime SSE	-.098	.093	-.143

ΔR^2 = .228 for Step 1 ($p < .01$); ΔR^2 = .013 for Step 2, ns; ΔR^2 = .009 for Step 3, ns ($p < .01$)

*p<.05; **p<.01.

Prior to analysis, scores for the dependent and predictor scales were centered. In order to determine whether the Recent or Lifetime SSE scales scores was a more salient predictor, Tabachnick and Fidell's (2001) technique for computing two sets of predictors was conducted. Tabachnick and Fidell's (2001) technique for computing two sets of

predictors was conducted prior to cases being removed from the sample. From the analysis, neither score emerged as a more salient predictor. The t score for this analysis was 1.288, which did not meet the cut-off of 1.96. Initially, if neither score emerged as a more salient predictor, Recent Sexist Events would be used. However, Recent Sexist Events produced slightly curvilinear results, and therefore Lifetime Sexist Events was used instead because the results showed no problems in normality. Prior to testing the data for normality, cases were examined in order to determine if any outliers might exist that would affect the data. All scores were within possible ranges, suggesting that they may represent actual cases in the population, and therefore none were removed from the sample. To examine the relationship between the participant's Relationship Quality and Benevolent Sexism, Relationship Quality and Hostile Sexism, and Relationship Quality and Lifetime Sexist Events, scores for each were entered in the first step of the model. Subsequent variables were entered into the regression equation as follows: three two-way interactions for the predictor variable (step 2); and one three-way interaction for the predictor variable (step 3).

In the first step of the regression analysis, step 1 accounted for 23.7% of the variability in participants' QRI Scores, $F (3, 89) = 9.217$, $p = .000$. BS scores, when entered first in the model, did not account for variability in participants' QRI Scores, B (.05011) *ns* = .352. Also, HS scores, when entered first in the model, did not account for variability in participants' QRI Scores, B (.06646) *ns* = .227. BS and HS did not account for the variability found in step one, therefore Lifetime SSE scores were responsible. The semi-partial correlations show that Lifetime SSE scores, when entered first in the model,

accounted for 21.62 % of the unique variability in participants' QRI Scores, B (.350) = .000.

In the second step, the two-way interactions were computed. The results indicated that the two-way interactions did not significantly improve the explanatory power of the model, F (3, 86) = 4.649, p = .826 *ns*. The two-way interaction between Lifetime SSE and BS scores, when entered second in the model, did not create a significant improvement in the model, *t* (3, 86) =.397, p = .692 *ns*. The two-way interaction between Lifetime SSE and HS Scores, when entered second in the model, also did not create a significant improvement in the model, *t* (3, 86) =.443, p= .659. Additionally, the two-way interaction between BS and HS Scores, when entered second in the model, did not create a significant improvement in the model, *t* (3, 86) = .492, p = .624 *ns*. The three-way interaction between BS, HS, and Lifetime SSE scores, when entered third in the model, did not create a significant improvement in the model, *F* (1, 85) = 4.147, p = .303 *ns*.

V. DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the results of the study will be discussed. First, a brief overview of the study will be presented. Secondly, the results of the study will be discussed in the context of the research hypotheses. Finally, limitations, implications for the study, recommendations for future study, and a conclusion will be presented.

Overview of the Study

Everyday interactions between women and men are constrained by beliefs about gender, leading women and men to recreate unequal gender systems over and over in their daily lives (Ridgeway and Smith-Lovin, 1999). Sexism differs from other forms of inequality because men and women have more contact and interactions through families, households, and other roles (Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin). For most women, experiences of sexist events are a consistent reality of life (Sabik & Tylka, 2006; Schmitt, Branscombe, & Postmes, 2003). Sexism has been found to impact women's mental health in a number of negative ways (Albee, 2005; Jost & Kay, 2005, Klonoff, Landrine, & Campbell, 2000; Moradi & Funderbank, 2006; Moradi & Subich, 2004; Moradi & Subich, 2002; Sabik & Tylka; Schmitt, et al.; Swim, et al.; Szymanski, 2005). One important aspect of mental health is relationship quality. Given the extensive interactions between women and men,

it is important to investigate the ways that sexism may impact these interactions, especially in regards to quality or satisfaction in romantic relationships.

Relationship satisfaction represents a very important aspect of mental health for both women and men; however, women's experiences within relationships are different than men's (Yakushko, 2005). For example, many argue that women place more importance on social relationships, even at times to the detriment of their own needs. Additionally, women are more likely to devalue their relationship capabilities (Owen-Blakemore, Lawton, & Vartanian, 2005; Sue & Sue, 2003). They may also overvalue the importance of attaching to a male or view themselves as valuable only as they are serving others (Atwood, 2001). Another important way that women may differ in their experience within relationships is in the roles that they assume. Though over time, the roles between married women and men have become more egalitarian, differences still remain (Owen-Blakemore, et al.). Men and women learn to behave differently within intimate relationships through gender stereotypes (Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin). For example, women are encouraged from a young age to be preoccupied with love and romantic relationships, while men are encouraged to focus on occupational success and self-fulfillment (Simon, Eder, & Evans, 1992.).

One explanation of how women are actively involved in accepting their unequal status and roles is that sexism is often enacted not solely through hostile means but through benevolent ideologies (Glick & Fiske, 1997). Benevolent sexism provides a means for women and men to maintain amicable relationships, particularly within intimate heterosexual relationships, because it provides a rationale for women to assume traditional roles, though these roles hold a lesser social value than men's roles (Fischer,

2006). Benevolent sexism creates the illusion that women, by their very existence, are naturally more suited to assume certain positions, which are complementary but "equal" to men's (Glick & Fiske). These roles, however, are not equal in status. Benevolent sexism, then, perpetuates an overall system of sexism: a system which impacts women's mental health negatively. Women's experiences of sexism are known to affect many areas of her mental health negatively, however, the relationship between these experiences and intimate relationship quality have not been fully examined to date. The purpose of this study was to add to the current research by examining the ways that benevolent sexist beliefs and experiences of sexism impact women's romantic relationship quality.

Relationship between Benevolent Sexism and Relationship Satisfaction

The first research hypothesis predicted a relationship between women's relationship quality and benevolent sexist beliefs. In the theory of Ambivalent Sexism, Glick and Fiske (1997) suggest that Benevolent Sexism is the means through which sexism is perpetuated through men's and women's interactions, specifically within intimate relationships. This study sought to examine if these beliefs would impact relationship satisfaction for women. The results, however, did not support a relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship quality in heterosexual women.

A number of possibilities exist for non-significant findings in the first hypothesis. The sample of participants in this study had a mean of 2.56 on the BS scale, which is considered "relatively sexist" with a cut-off of 2.5 (Glick, 2007), therefore the lack of significant results was not due to a lack of benevolent ideologies in the sample. Scores above 2.5 on the BS subscale are considered Benevolent Sexists. Glick (2007) defines

Benevolent Sexists (with higher than a 2.5 on the BS subscale) as individuals who embrace traditional gender roles and also hold positive feelings towards stereotypes of women. Glick (2007) also explains that Benevolent Sexists do not necessarily hold hostile attitudes towards women who do not fulfill traditional roles unless they are also Hostile Sexists.

The theory behind benevolent sexism, suggests that its very purpose is to allow relationships between men and women to operate amicably while maintaining inequality in the current gender order (Fischer, 2006). Though sexism has been found to impact women negatively, the amicable nature of benevolent sexism may counteract any direct relationship to negative effects within the relationship. In this study, relationship quality was measured through conflict in the relationship. Participant's whose benevolent ideologies matched the realities of their relationship (whether high or low) might not experience conflict due to their unequal status because they believe it to be justified. Another possibility is that benevolent sexism is a subtle form of sexism, and while it serves to reinforce the dominant patriarchal ideologies, its subtle form may produce more subtle or complex effects that this study did not directly investigate. Additionally, it is possible that while Benevolent Sexist beliefs may be present, women may not be aware of them and therefore it does not impact the quality of their relationships.

Additionally, while participants may hold Benevolent Sexist beliefs, this does not necessarily mean that they experience Benevolent Sexism in their relationships. It might be worthwhile for future studies to investigate if such experiences in the relationship relate to relationship quality. However, these results could also be due to relatively low levels of conflict in the sample. These low levels made it difficult to tell what the

relationship might be, and with a larger sample, perhaps this could be investigated further. It is also possible that the reason no significant results were found is simply that there is no relationship between these variables. It is possible that the research suggesting a relationship might be found is out-dated and cultural shifts since that time have impacted how women experience relationships.

Relationship Between Hostile Sexism and Relationship Satisfaction

The second research hypothesis predicted a relationship between women's relationship quality and hostile sexist beliefs. Hostile Sexism represents the more blatantly sexist beliefs and is the form of sexism on which most studies of sexism focus (Glick & Fiske, 1997). Hostile and Benevolent sexism are both inexorably linked, as both serve to reinforce the dominant patriarchal structure (Fischer, 2006; Forbes, et al., 2006). Given the relationship between Benevolent and Hostile Sexism, both were studied here in order to determine if one, both, or neither would be related to relationship quality for heterosexual women. The results, however, did not support a relationship between Hostile Sexism and Relationship Quality in heterosexual women.

Similar to what was found for Benevolent Sexism, non-significant findings in the first hypothesis could be explained in a number of ways. For example, though women experience benevolent and hostile sexism in their day to day experiences, many of these experiences may go undetected because they are viewed as normative (Swim, et al., 2004). If women hold Hostile Sexist beliefs, they may be more likely to be unable to detect the events as harmful, and therefore it may not be related to an increase in conflict in their relationships.

In this sample, the mean score for HS beliefs was 2.28, a minimum score of .36 and a maximum score of 4.27. Scores above 2.5 on the HS subscale are considered Hostile Sexists. Hostile Sexists are described as individuals (scoring higher than 2.5 on the HS subscale) who are likely to ascribe to negative stereotypes for women rejecting traditional roles and behaviors (Glick, 2007). While the mean for the sample was below the cut-off of 2.5, with a maximum score of 4.27, at least one participant in the sample did hold Hostile Sexist beliefs. Similar to what was discussed with Benevolent Sexism, the effects of holding Hostile Sexist beliefs though they are not subtle, may still be complex and not directly relate to quality in romantic relationships. Additionally, though women may hold these beliefs, Hostile Sexism may or may not be present in their relationships. This may, at least partially, explain why there was no relationship found. However, these results could also be due to relatively low levels of conflict in the sample. These low levels made it difficult to tell what the relationship might be, and with a larger sample, perhaps this could be investigated further. It is also possible that there is no relationship between these variables. Cultural shifts that may have occurred since the previous research was conducted may also have occurred, impacting how women experience their relationships.

Relationship Between Lifetime Sexist Events and Relationship Satisfaction

The third research hypothesis predicted a relationship between women's relationship quality and experience of sexist events. Sexist events have been found to have a number of negative mental health effects for women (Albee, 2005; Jost & Kay, 2005, Klonoff, Landrine, & Campbell, 2000; Moradi & Funderbank, 2006; Moradi & Subich, 2004; Moradi & Subich, 2002; Sabik & Tylka; Schmitt, et al.; Swim, et al.;

Szymanski, 2005). Relationship problems are consistently overrepresented in presenting problems for women seeking therapy, and are the number one reason that women experience acute emotional distress (Synder, et al., 2005; Vaughn & Matyastick Baier, 1999). Despite the fact that sexism is pervasive in women's lives, the connection between relationship quality and experiences of sexism has not been studied adequately. Therefore, this study sought to examine this relationship. Results from this analysis produced significant results, confirming a relationship between the two.

Lifetime sexist events accounted for 21.62 % of the unique variability in participants' QRI Scores. These results suggest that when women experience sexist events over their lifetime, that it can negatively impact their later quality in relationships. This is not surprising, considering that previous research has shown that experiences of sexism have been related to negative mental health outcomes, many of which have been found to impact relationship satisfaction. Though a relationship between Lifetime Sexist Events and Relationship Quality was found, the full nature of this relationship should be further explored to determine, how other negative mental health outcomes may impact this relationship.

Two-way and Three-way Interactions and Relationship Quality

In the fifth hypothesis, it was predicted that women's relationship quality would be related to women's experiences of sexist events based on their tendency to hold Hostile Sexist beliefs, Benevolent Sexist beliefs, or both. In addition to looking at Hostile Sexism, Benevolent Sexism, and experiences of Lifetime Sexist Events individually, it was important to investigate whether or not the two and three-way interactions might contribute to Relationship Quality. Specifically, in the first two-way interaction, in

addition to investigating whether Hostile Sexist Beliefs and Lifetime Sexist Events explain a portion of the relationship with Relationship Quality individually, it was important to understand whether or not the two interact in a way that would further explain this relationship. For example, if one experienced a large number of sexist events and also held a large number of Hostile Sexist Beliefs, this might further impact Relationship Quality, above and beyond what was found for either individually. Similarly, if either did not explain a relationship by themselves, it is possible that when they come together, they could result in negative effects. The results of this analysis, however, did not produce significant results. Therefore, it is possible that there is no relationship between these variables.

In the second two-way interaction, it was predicted that the interaction between Benevolent Sexist beliefs and Lifetime Sexist Events would be related to Relationship Quality. In addition to no main effects being found for Benevolent Sexist Beliefs in step one, the interaction between Benevolent Sexist beliefs and Lifetime Sexist Events also did not produce significant results. Additionally, in the third two-way interaction, it was predicted that women's relationship quality would be related to women's benevolent sexist beliefs based on their tendency to hold hostile sexist beliefs. The two-way interaction between Hostile and Benevolent Sexist Beliefs is called Ambivalent Sexism when levels of both are high, and Non-Sexist when both levels are low. Similar to what was reported for the other two-way interactions, if Benevolent Sexism and Hostile Sexism were both related to Relationship Quality, it would be important to investigate whether or not the interaction between the two could help to explain this relationship. If both Benevolent Sexist and Hostile Sexism explain a portion of the relationship with

Relationship Quality, then it would also be important to understand whether or not the two considered together would further explain this relationship. For example, if one experienced a large number of Benevolent Sexism Beliefs and also held a large number of Hostile Sexist Beliefs, this might further impact Relationship Quality, above and beyond what was found for either individually. Or, if both did not explain a relationship by themselves, it is possible that they could produce a unique relationship together that they do not individually. The results of this analysis, however, did not produce significant results.

Significant results were not found for either Hostile or Benevolent Sexism in the first step, and additionally the two did not produce significant results when considered together. As was discussed earlier in regards to Benevolent and Hostile Sexism, Benevolent Sexism is a subtle form of sexism, and while it serves to reinforce the dominant patriarchal ideologies, its subtle form may produce more subtle or complex effects that this study did not directly investigate. Since significant results were not found for this part of the study, the only conclusion that can be drawn is that this interaction does not account for a significant portion of variance in Relationship Quality for this sample.

Though the results for Step 2 did not produce significant results, there was a trend suggesting that it might be moving towards significance. While this was not found in this study, future research with a larger sample might produce significant results. Since significant results were not found when testing this hypothesis, the only conclusion that can be drawn is that this interaction does not account for a significant portion of variance in Relationship Quality for this sample. Additionally, the three-way interaction between

Benevolent Sexist beliefs, Hostile Sexist beliefs, and Lifetime Sexist Events did not produce significant results. Therefore, it is concluded that there is no relationship between the three-way interaction and Relationship Quality.

Limitations of the Study

Within this sample, there were not high levels of conflict reported. While the author cannot know what would have been detected if higher levels had been reported, it is possible that this might have impacted the results of the analysis, especially where no significant results were found. A number of factors may influence the generalizability of this sample to female college students. First of all, the sample was not obtained randomly. Future studies might benefit from finding a more randomized means of collecting data. Secondly, the study took place at a large Southwestern University instead of drawing from a national sample. As sexism is a cultural construct, which is passed on through the process of socialization, variations in culture across different regions of the nation would make it reasonable for future studies to attempt to gain a national sample to ensure that differences based on regional differences are accounted for. Additionally, this study looked specifically at heterosexual relationships. While it makes sense to study heterosexual relationships given that sexism occurs between different sexed people, it is unclear whether or not experiencing sexism in general also might impact relationships for lesbians. This study only required that participants were currently engaging in a heterosexual relationship, and therefore, bisexual women were not excluded provided they were in a relationship with a male at the time of the study. Since this study did not gather information relating to sexual orientation, it is unclear whether or not these results

could be generalized to bisexual women as well, even if they are in a heterosexual relationship. Similarly, this study did not gather information related to racial/ethnic backgrounds. Though the University in question is predominantly made up of Caucasian students, exact numbers of participants based on race/ ethnicity were not obtained. It is therefore unclear as to exactly what groups of women this study represents. It would be important to fully examine how sexism may impact women of color as well as understanding how racism and sexism may work together or separately to affect women of color. Also, this study focused solely on female college students, and results can not be generalized to women who are not enrolled in college or who fall outside of the age-range of typical college-age women.

This study sought to gain participants from a variety of disciplines in order to gain access to a more representative sample of the college population, however, in order to gain participants, classes which are predominantly female were chosen for inclusion. This can be problematic because this represents only a portion of women's experiences. Though initially it was planned, for example, to gain participants from the Engineering Department, low enrollment of female students made it so that this class had to be dropped from the pool of participants. To make up for this, classes such as Pharmacy were added (which though it is made up of predominantly female student, it is based in the hard sciences), as most of the other classes surveyed were in the human sciences. However, though the Pharmacy class held over 140 students, response rates were very low, with only 6 survey packets returned from this discipline. It would be good for future studies to find ways to access women across all disciplines.

In addition to limits in generalizability, this study solely looked at the relationship between variables. Therefore, causation cannot be assumed. While the results provide interesting information to add to the current understanding of the many ways that sexism may impact women, it does not explain how this relationship is constructed. For example, does experiencing sexism create other negative psychological effects, which impact relationship quality or is the relationship more direct?

Another limitation of the study is that the measures were all self-report. It is widely discussed in the literature that women may have difficulty identifying events as sexist if they are considered normative. It is impossible to tell how women's perceptions of sexist events might impact their ability to accurately label events as sexist. Also, with the social pressure that women may feel to be successful in relationships, some women may be disinclined to report conflict in their relationship. In self-report measures there is always the chance that reporting may be skewed by perception and socially desirable reporting. Future studies may look at other forms of reporting that would produce more accurate results. Despite its limitations, reliability results that were found were in the range of what had been found previously, suggesting good reliability for each measure throughout the study.

Finally, this study measured Relationship Quality through the Conflict Scale of the Quality of Relationships Inventory. While this scale is related to the other scales of the measure, and also is able to stand alone, the results of this study solely focus on conflict experienced in intimate relationships. In order to gain a more full understanding of ways that experiences of sexism may impact women's relationships, it would be interesting to

investigate the other scales of Support and Depth as well or to look at other aspects of relationships, such as sexual functioning.

Implications

This study added to what was previously known about the impact of oppressions, such as sexism, on the mental health of those who experience it. While previous studies have sought to explore symptom-specific relationships, such as that between sexism and depression or anxiety, this study looked in a new area: the quality of intimate heterosexual relationships. Significant results were not obtained for the relationship between Hostile or Benevolent Sexist Beliefs and Relationship Quality. A relationship was only found for Lifetime Sexist Events and Relationship Quality. Though causation could not be determined through the scope of this study, counselors should be aware of the relationship between Relationship Quality and experiences of sexism. This information, and especially future exploration into the nature of this relationship, could inform interventions into relationships problems. For example, it would be worthwhile for counselors to explore sexism that women have experienced in general (as opposed to just specifically to the context of their intimate relationship) when clients present with relationship problems to understand on an individual basis how such events may have impacted the client's experiences leading up to and within their intimate relationship. Additionally, this study provides further support for the idea of examining socio-cultural factors in the context of counseling as a means to not only understand the client's perspective better, but also as a means to help the client place their experience in a larger or environmental context.

As counselors continue to examine the importance of their role as social change agents, this study adds credence to the importance of this role. While broad, socio-cultural forces impact entire groups of people negatively, what counselors do one on one in session only allows counselors to address the problem one person at a time. Through advocacy and activism, counselors can impact their individual clients positively as well as addressing problems that affect their community and future clients as well. By addressing larger social problems, such as that of sexism, on a macro-level, these efforts will have a broad impact on all those affected by the problem. Examples of addressing the problem on a macro-level include, but are not limited to, community education, consciousness raising, examination of sexist institutions, practices, and the barriers that they produce, and developing strategies to address institutional barriers. Another goal of therapy can be to empower clients to cope with sexist events in ways that will help them to avoid negative mental health consequences, such as a decline in intimate relationship quality.

This study also produced implications for future research. This study did not substantiate a relationship between Benevolent and Hostile Sexist beliefs and Relationship Quality; therefore, one may not exist. However, it is also possible that this does not mean that those beliefs do not impact women negatively. It would be important to conduct more research in order to determine how these may affect women. Additionally, future research could examine the relationship that was supported here, between Lifetime Sexist Events and Relationship Satisfaction, in order to determine causation or a more full explanation of the nature of the relationship between the two. Additionally, future study could help to examine groups not studied here, such as

lesbians, bisexual women, non-college students, different age groups, or specifically for different racial or ethnic groups of women.

Conclusion

This study found that there is a significant relationship between women's heterosexual Relationship Quality and Lifetime Sexist Events experienced. While this study investigated whether or not a relationship existed between the two, it did not investigate the nature of that relationship, except to learn that it is a positive relationship, meaning that, generally speaking, women who have experienced more sexist events in their lifetime also experience lower levels of relationship quality/higher levels of conflict. This study did not find significant results for Hostile or Benevolent Sexist Beliefs and Relationship Quality, or for any of the two-way or three-way interactions.

Recommendations for counselors include examining women's experiences of sexism when they present to counseling with intimate heterosexual relationship problems and to use their role as social change agents to address the problem on a macro-level. By examining experiences of sexism, counselors will not only gain more insight into their client's problem and life, but they can also help the client to gain insight into how socio-cultural forces have impacted their experiences in order to help them to become empowered to address barriers and events they may face in the future. Finally, it is recommended that future studies investigate more fully the relationship that was found in this study in order to determine the nature of that relationship and to establish causation where it exists. It would also be helpful to extend the scope of the study to include a greater representation of women (women who are not in college, women of different

racial/ethnic backgrounds and sexual orientations) in addition to examining different areas of relationship quality (e.g. Depth and Support).

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

DEMOGRAPHICS AND EXPERIENCES QUESTIONNAIRE

Demographics and Experiences Questionnaire

The Relationship between Experiences of Sexism, Ambivalent Sexism, and Relationship Quality in Heterosexual Women

Demographic Questions:

1. **Gender _____**
2. **Age _____**
3. **Is your current relationship heterosexual? (circle one)**

   Yes No
4. **Are you currently in multiple relationships? (circle one)**

   Yes No

Questions about Experiences:

1. **Are you currently in a relationship? (circle one):**

   Yes No
2. **How long have you been in your current relationship? _____**
3. **Are you co-habiting and/or married?**

   Yes No

APPENDIX B

THE QUALITY OF RELATIONSHIPS INVENTORY (QRI)

Quality of Relationships Inventory (Conflict Scale)

Please use the scale below to answer the following questions regarding your relationship with _____.

-1-	-2-	-3-	-4-
Not at all	A little	Quite a bit	Very much

1. How often do you need to work hard to avoid conflict with this person?

   1 2 3 4

2. How upset does this person sometimes make you feel?

   1 2 3 4

3. How much does this person make you feel guilty?

   1 2 3 4

4. How much do you have to "give in" in this relationship?

   1 2 3 4

5. How much does this person want you to change?

   1 2 3 4

6. How critical of you is this person?

   1 2 3 4

7. How much would you like this person to change?

   1 2 3 4

8. How angry does this person make you feel?

   1 2 3 4

9. How much do you argue with this person?

   1 2 3 4

10. How often does this person make you feel angry?

    1 2 3 4

11. How often does this person try to control or influence your life?

    1 2 3 4

12. How much more do you give than you get from this relationship?

    1 2 3 4

Scoring Instructions for the QRI:

The Quality of Relationships Inventory (QRI) yields three scores: (a) social support, (b) depth, and (c) conflict. The Social Support score is computed by averaging the following items: 1,3,5,8,15,18, 22. The Depth score is computed by averaging the following items: 10,11,12,13, 16,17. The Conflict score is computed by averaging the following items: 2,4,6,7,9,14,19,20,21,23,24,25.

APPENDIX C

THE SCHEDULE OF SEXIST EVENTS (SSE)

Schedule of Sexist Events

Please think carefully about your life as you answer the questions below. For each question, read the question and then answer it twice: answer once for what your ENTIRE LIFE (from when you were a child to now) has been like, and then once for what the PAST YEAR has been like. Circle the number that best describes events in YOUR ENTIRE LIFE, and in the PAST YEAR, using these rules:

Circle 1 = If the event has NEVER happened to you
Circle 2 = If the event happened ONCE IN A WHILE (less than 10% of the time)
Circle 3 = If the event happened SOMETIMES (10-25% of the time)
Circle 4 = If the event happened A LOT (26-49% of the time)
Circle 5 = If the event happened MOST OF THE TIME (50-70% of the time)
Circle 6 = If the event happened ALMOST ALL OF THE TIME (more than 70% of the time)

1. How many times have you been treated unfairly by teachers or professors because you are a woman?
   How many times IN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE? 1 2 3 4 5 6
   How many times IN THE PAST YEAR? 1 2 3 4 5 6

2. How many times have you been treated unfairly by your employer, boss or supervisor because you are a woman?
   How many times IN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE? 1 2 3 4 5 6
   How many times IN THE PAST YEAR? 1 2 3 4 5 6

3. How many times have you been treated unfairly by your co-workers, fellow students or colleagues because you are a woman?
   How many times IN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE? 1 2 3 4 5 6
   How many times IN THE PAST YEAR? 1 2 3 4 5 6

4. How many times have you been treated unfairly by people in serve jobs (by store clerks, waiters, bartenders, waitresses, bank tellers, mechanics and others) because you are a woman?
   How many times IN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE? 1 2 3 4 5 6
   How many times IN THE PAST YEAR? 1 2 3 4 5 6

5. How many times have you been treated unfairly by strangers because you are a woman?
   How many times IN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE? 1 2 3 4 5 6
   How many times IN THE PAST YEAR? 1 2 3 4 5 6

6. How many times have you been treated unfairly by people in helping jobs (by doctors, nurses, psychiatrists, gynecologists, and others) because you are a woman?
   How many times IN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE? 1 2 3 4 5 6
   How many times IN THE PAST YEAR? 1 2 3 4 5 6

7. How many times have you been treated unfairly by neighbors because you are a woman?
   How many times IN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE? 1 2 3 4 5 6
   How many times IN THE PAST YEAR? 1 2 3 4 5 6

8. How many times have you been treated unfairly by your boyfriend, husband, or other important man in your life because you are a woman?
   How many times IN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE? 1 2 3 4 5 6
   How many times IN THE PAST YEAR? 1 2 3 4 5 6

9. How many times were you denied a raise, a promotion, tenure, a good assignment, a job, or other such thing at work that you deserved because you were a woman?
   How many times IN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE? 1 2 3 4 5 6
   How many times IN THE PAST YEAR? 1 2 3 4 5 6

10. How many times have you been treated unfairly by your family because you are a woman?
    How many times IN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE? 1 2 3 4 5 6
    How many times IN THE PAST YEAR? 1 2 3 4 5 6

11. How many times have people made inappropriate or unwanted sexual advances to you because you are a woman?
    How many times IN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE? 1 2 3 4 5 6
    How many times IN THE PAST YEAR? 1 2 3 4 5 6

12. How many times have people failed to show you the respect that you deserve because you are a woman?
    How many times IN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE? 1 2 3 4 5 6
    How many times IN THE PAST YEAR? 1 2 3 4 5 6

13. How many times have you wanted to tell someone off for being sexist?
    How many times IN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE? 1 2 3 4 5 6
    How many times IN THE PAST YEAR? 1 2 3 4 5 6

14. How many times have you been really angry about something sexist that was done to you?

How many times IN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE?	1	2	3	4	5	6
How many times IN THE PAST YEAR?	1	2	3	4	5	6

15. How many times were you forced to take drastic steps (such as filing a grievance, filing a lawsuit, quitting your job, moving away, and other actions) to deal with some sexist thing that was done to you?

How many times IN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE?	1	2	3	4	5	6
How many times IN THE PAST YEAR?	1	2	3	4	5	6

16. How many times have you been called a sexist name like bitch, cunt, chick, or other names?

How many times IN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE?	1	2	3	4	5	6
How many times IN THE PAST YEAR?	1	2	3	4	5	6

17. How many times have you gotten into an argument or a fight about something sexist that was done or said to you or done to somebody else?

How many times IN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE?	1	2	3	4	5	6
How many times IN THE PAST YEAR?	1	2	3	4	5	6

18. How many times have you been made fun of, picked on, pushed, shoved, hit, or threatened with harm because you are a woman?

How many times IN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE?	1	2	3	4	5	6
How many times IN THE PAST YEAR?	1	2	3	4	5	6

19. How many times have you heard people making sexist jokes, or degrading sexual jokes?

How many times IN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE?	1	2	3	4	5	6
How many times IN THE PAST YEAR?	1	2	3	4	5	6

20. How different would your life be now if you HAD NOT BEEN treated in a sexist and unfair way

THROUGHOUT YOUR ENTIRE LIFE?

The Same as it is now	A little different	Different in a few ways	Different in a lot of ways	Different in most ways	Totally different
1	2	3	4	5	6

IN THE PAST YEAR?

The Same as it is now	A little different	Different in a few ways	Different in a lot of ways	Different in most ways	Totally different
1	2	3	4	5	6

APPENDIX D

THE AMBIVALENT SEXISM INVENTORY (ASI)

Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI)

Below are a series of statements concerning men and women and their relationships in contemporary society. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement using the scale below:

Note: To take this test, I recommend that you print a hard copy and answer each question in the blanks provided. Scoring methods are provided at the end.

0	1	2	3	4	5
disagree strongly	disagree somewhat	disagree slightly	agree slightly	agree somewhat	agree strongly

---

____ 1. No matter how accomplished he is, a man is not truly complete as a person unless he has the love of a woman.

____ 2. Many women are actually seeking special favors, such as hiring policies that favor them over men, under the guise of asking for "equality."

____ 3. In a disaster, women ought not necessarily to be rescued before men.

____ 4. Most women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist.

____ 5. Women are too easily offended.

____ 6. People are often truly happy in life without being romantically involved with a member of the other sex.

____ 7. Feminists are not seeking for women to have more power than men.

____ 8. Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess.

____ 9. Women should be cherished and protected by men.

____ 10. Most women fail to appreciate fully all that men do for them.

____ 11. Women seek to gain power by getting control over men.

____ 12. Every man ought to have a woman whom he adores.

____ 13. Men are complete without women.

____ 14. Women exaggerate problems they have at work.

____ 15. Once a woman gets a man to commit to her, she usually tries to put him on a tight leash.

____ 16. When women lose to men in a fair competition, they typically complain about being discriminated against.

____ 17. A good woman should be set on a pedestal by her man.

____ 18. There are actually very few women who get a kick out of teasing men by seeming sexually available and then refusing male advances.

____ 19. Women, compared to men, tend to have a superior moral sensibility.

____ 20. Men should be willing to sacrifice their own well being in order to provide financially for the women in their lives.

____ 21. Feminists are making entirely reasonable demands of men.

____ 22. Women, as compared to men, tend to have a more refined sense of culture and good taste.

SCORING:

REVERSE THE FOLLOWING ITEMS: 3, 6, 7, 13, 18, 21

(i.e., 0 becomes 5, 1 becomes 4, etc.)

HOSTILE SEXISM (HS) SCORE = average the following items:

2, 4, 5, 7, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 18, 21

BENEVOLENT SEXISM (BS) SCORE = average the following items:

1, 3, 6, 8, 9, 12, 13, 17, 19, 20, 22

OVERALL AMBIVALENT SEXISM SCORE = average of HOSTILE and BENEVOLENT SEXISM scores.

WHAT YOUR SCORE MEANS:

The ASI is intended mainly to measure MEN'S attitudes toward women. Women, however, can also take the scale.

Scores above 2.5 one each scale can be considered relatively "sexist."

HOSTILE SEXISTS (2.5 and above on the HS subscale) are likely to hold negative stereotypes of women who reject traditional female roles and behaviors (e.g., feminists, career women).

BENVEOLENT SEXISTS (2.5 and above on the BS subscale) tend to have particularly positive feelings about and stereotypes of women who embrace traditional roles (e.g., homemakers, moms), but are not necessarily hostile toward women who reject these roles (unless they are also hostile sexists).

AMBIVALENT SEXISTS (2.5 and above on both HS and BS) have the traits of both hostile and benevolent sexists and tend to have polarized or extreme reactions to women depending on which aspect of their attitudes is activated (e.g., the same person may be highly hostile to career women, but reverent toward homemakers).

NON-SEXISTS (below 2.5 on both HS and BS) tend to be more egalitarian.

APPENDIX E

SCRIPT

SCRIPT for the Research Study Entitled

"The Relationship between Experiences of Sexism, Ambivalent Sexism, and Relationship Quality in Heterosexual Women"
Amney Harper Primary Researcher

My name is Amney Harper and I am a doctoral student in Auburn University's Department of Counselor Education, School Psychology, and Counseling Psychology. I am under the supervision of Dr. Jamie Carney, Committee Chair and Professor

I am asking for your participation in a research project designed to investigate the relationship between sexism and heterosexual relationship quality.

The study focuses on experiences of sexism, sexist beliefs, and their relationship to quality in intimate heterosexual relationship for female college students.

Your decision to participate in this study is voluntary.

To participate in this study you need to be age 19 and above, female, and currently in an intimate heterosexual relationship. Participants may be dating, cohabiting, or married.

If you choose to participate, you will be asked to complete four assessment instruments that will take about 35-45 minutes of your time.

Once you complete the measures, please place them back into the survey packet envelope and seal the envelope.

You will have the opportunity to return the packets to me during the first 5 minutes of your next class session.

I do not anticipate any possible risks or discomforts associated with participation in this study, but a list of counseling centers has been provide to you in case you experience any emotional discomfort during or after participation in the study.

There are no benefits from participating in this study.

All data collected in this study is anonymous so once you have decided to participate and return your survey packet your data will not be able to be withdrawn from the study.

If you have any questions feel free to ask them now or used the contact information enclosed in the assessment packet to contact me at a later date.

APPENDIX F

AUBURN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL TO CONDUCT STUDY

AUBURN
UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF COUNSELOR EDUCATION,
COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY, AND SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY

(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS AN IRB APPROVAL STAMP WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN APPLIED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

INFORMATION LETTER
for a Research Study entitled
"The Relationship between Experiences of Sexism, Ambivalent Sexism, and Relationship Quality in Heterosexual Women"

You are invited to participate in a research study to investigate the relationship between experiences of sexism, hostile and benevolent sexist beliefs, and quality in intimate heterosexual relationship for women. The study is being conducted by Amney Harper under the direction of Dr. Jamie Carney, Professor, in the Auburn University Department of Department of Counselor Education, Counseling Psychology, and School Psychology. You were selected as a possible participant because you are an undergraduate or graduate student, female, in an intimate heterosexual relationship, and are age 19 or older.

If you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to answer some demographic questions. Then you will be asked to rate your agreement or disagreement with several statements about your current romantic relationship and beliefs about men and women. Lastly, you will be asked to rate the frequency you have experienced particular events in the last year and in your lifetime. Your total time commitment will be approximately 35-45 minutes. This is a one time commitment, and you will not be asked to provide any further information once you have completed the questionnaires. If you decide to participate, you will return completed survey packets in the blank sealed envelope provided to you with the survey materials during the first 5 minutes of the following class.

There is no expected risk to participants in this study. There is the possibility of some slight emotional discomfort related to the topic, but it is not expected that this would be any greater than you might experience or encounter in daily life by discussing or viewing content on sexism or relationships. To address the potential concerns about minimal emotional discomfort a referral list of mental health providers is included in your information packet. This is an anonymous study for which no identifying data will be collected, therefore it will not be possible to track or identify individual participants.

If you change your mind about participating, you can stop filling out the survey at any time, however, once you turn in the survey you cannot withdraw your data later because there will be no way to identify individual information. Your

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COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY, AND SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY

participation is completely voluntary. Your decision about whether or not to participate or to stop participating will not jeopardize your future relations with Auburn University or the Department of Counselor Education, Counseling Psychology, and School Psychology.

There are no expected benefits for participation in the study. There will be no compensation for participation in this study. Participation is completely voluntary.

Any information obtained in connection with this study will remain anonymous. Your privacy will be protected. Information obtained through your participation may be used to fulfill educational requirements of my program of study which includes an original research dissertation. In addition, this information may be published in professional journals and/or presented at a professional meeting or conference.

If you have questions about this study, please ask them now or contact Amney Harper at (765) 717-4487 or harpeaj@auburn.edu or Dr. Jamie Carney at (334) 844-5160 or carnejs@auburn.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Auburn University Office of Human Subjects Research or the Institutional Review Board by phone (334)-844-5966 or e-mail at hsubjec@auburn.edu or IRBChair@auburn.edu.

HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED, YOU MUST DECIDE IF YOU WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT. IF YOU DECIDE TO PARTICIPATE, THE DATA YOU PROVIDE WILL SERVE AS YOUR AGREEMENT TO DO SO. THIS LETTER IS YOURS TO KEEP.

Amney Harper 2-8-08
Investigator's signature Date

Amney Harper
Print Name

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