The Effects of Sexist Language on Attribution of Blame Following Sexual Assault

by

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between the sexist language used to describe women, whether that language was presented implicitly or explicitly, and blame ratings following the reading of an acquaintance-based sexual assault scenario. Participants (N=191) were implicitly or explicitly primed with hostile sexist, benevolent sexist, or neutral language and then asked to rate perpetrator and victim blame following a sexual assault scenario. Results indicate that while participants were successfully primed with the language, there was no statistically significant difference in blame ratings between the explicit and implicit priming conditions. Additionally, the language condition (hostile, benevolent, neutral) did not significantly alter participants' blame ratings.

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iii

Table of Contents

List of Tables

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In American culture, exposure to images, scenarios, and language that promote sexism either directly or indirectly through gender stereotypes is commonplace (Flaudi, 1992; Forbes, Collinsworth, Jobe, Braun, & Wise, 2007; Matthews, 2007; Yoder, Christopher, & Holmes, 2008). Although individuals may not believe these messages are altering their perception, a wealth of research indicates that these messages can be later acted upon cognitively or behaviorally without individuals' conscious awareness (Bush & Geer, 2001; Chiu et al., 1998; Cobb & Boettcher, 2007; Cralley & Ruscher, 2005; Lauzen, Dozier, & Horan 2008; Lenton, Blair, & Hastie, 2003; Rudman & Borgida, 1995; Schacter, 1987; Yao, Mahood, & Linz, 2010). Sexism has many implications in the lives of women from daily interactions to job accessibility and sexual assault. Recent research has linked sexism with judgments of victim blame following the reading of sexual assault scenarios (Abrams, Viki, Masser, & Bohner, 2003; Bondurant & Donat, 1999; Viki & Abrams, 2002; Yamawaki, 2007).

It is important to note that sexism and sexual assault affects men as well as women. Men are often the victims of sexual assault and frequently these assaults go unreported (Peterson, Voller, Polusney, & Murdoch, 2011). Men suffer many psychological consequences and are even less likely to report the psychological consequences that accompany sexual assault than are women (Helgeson, 2002; Peterson et al.). While sexual assault on men is an important topic, the

1

focus of this study will be on language used to describe women and sexual assault in which the woman is the victim.

While there are several models that describe sexism, Glick and Fiske's model of ambivalent sexism (1996, 2001) was used in this study because it includes a "benevolent" component and has generated extensive follow-up research. In fact, *Sex Roles* recently devoted an entire issue to Ambivalent Sexism (2010). Ambivalent sexism is a theory of sexism that includes two different elements: hostile sexism and benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Hostile sexism is defined as a general antipathy toward women whereas benevolent sexism is more complex. Benevolent sexism can feel positive to the sexist individual as well as look positive from an outsider's perspective. However, because those with benevolent sexism view women in a traditional and stereotypical fashion, women are often restricted to gender "appropriate" roles and behaviors if they are to be viewed favorably (Glick & Fiske, 1996). This study attempted to activate sexist behavior by using a language-based implicit or explicit priming task. There is a need for research that experimentally explores whether or not sexism can be activated through language alone.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (2008), 10.6 % of 9,684 women surveyed reported experiencing a sexual assault at some point in their lives. Other studies indicate that by age eighteen, one in four girls will be sexually assaulted (Finkelhor, Hotaling, Lewis, & Smith, 1990). Additionally, Flack et al. (2007) found that in a sample of college students, 23% of women and 7% of men reported at least one incidence of unwanted sexual intercourse. Individuals who experience a sexual assault often blame themselves or feel blame from others

(Campbell, Dworkin, & Cabral, 2009; Finkelhor et al., 1990; Flack et al., 2007; Frazier, 2003; Miller, Markman, & Handley, 2007; Shapiro & Schwarz, 1997). Due to the high rates of those who experience sexual assault, there are many individuals who will be affected by victim blaming. There are important implications for victim blaming, specifically the amount of blame ascribed to sexual assault survivors may influence both the emotional, social, and legal support they receive (Shapiro & Schwarz, 1997).

It is critical that therapists be aware of sexism and how its effects can impact clients. Clients may present in therapy with effects such as anxiety and depression and may not recognize these effects as being related to sexism. Landry and Murcurio (2009) found that for women, perceived sexism is associated with more psychological distress as measured by the Brief Symptom Inventory. More specifically, the amount of reported psychological distress was partially mediated by perceived control such that those experiencing perceived sexism also experience a decreased sense of control. Reported sexist events have been shown to also have direct (unmediated) effects on mental health concerns such as anxiety, depression, and well-being (Fischer & Holz, 2010). Given that the average women reports one to two sexist events per week (Swim, Hyers, Cohen, & Ferguson, 2001), the impact is considerable. Tolerance of sexual harassment has been also been associated with ambivalent sexism (Russell & Trigg, 2004) and may be an issue that arises in a therapeutic setting. Women who appear to have more masculine personality traits such as assertiveness and independence are more likely to experience sexual harassment (Berdahl, 2007) and less likely to have that harassment be identified as such (Wiener, Reiter-Palmon, Winter, Richter, Humke, & Maeder, 2010). It is important for therapists to be

educated regarding the effects of sexism so that they may educate their clients and provide more culturally-appropriate care.

It is also important for therapists to be aware of the impact that sexism has on victim blaming following a sexual assault. The language that is used with a client may contain underlying sexist messages that impact the client. Additionally, in working with clients following a sexual assault, it is important to be aware that many victims believe others may have blamed them for the assault, particularly in cases of acquaintance rape (Ben-David & Schneider, 2005; Campbell, Dworkin, & Cabral, 2009; Krahé, Temkin, & Bieneck, 2007; Monson, Langhinrichsen-Rohling, & Binderup, 2000). In fact, victims of acquaintance rape are often blamed more than victims of stranger rape (Bridges & McGrail, 1989), and at least 78% of rapes are perpetrated by individuals known to the victim (Kilpatrick, Edmunds, & Seymour, 1992). One facet of Ambivalent Sexism, "benevolent" sexism, is a particularly important element of sexism in that it is generally more socially acceptable and yet moderates victim blame as well as perpetrator blame in acquaintance rape (Abrams, et al. 2003; Viki & Abrams, 2002; Yamawaki, 2007).

This study compared the implicit and explicit priming of sexist schemas consistent with Glick and Fiske's concept of Ambivalent Sexism (1996) and assessed whether or not these schemas affected victim and perpetrator blame following a written acquaintance rape scenario. Support for a relationship between sexist language and blame ratings was investigated to increase awareness of the importance of language used to describe women. This implication is particularly important given that while hostile sexist language appears negative and criticizing,

benevolent sexist language is often perceived as positive (Glick & Fiske). Presenting sexist language in an implicit as well as an explicit priming task was designed to add to the understanding of covert and overt types of sexist language. Additionally, this study investigated the relationship between types of sexist language (benevolent, hostile, neutral) and blame ratings (victim, perpetrator) regarding characters in an acquaintance based sexual assault scenario.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Ambivalent Sexism

The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2010) defines sexism as "1. prejudice or discrimination based on sex; or *2.* behavior, conditions, or attitudes that foster stereotypes of social roles based on sex." Classic definitions of sexism are generally broad, whereas the multi-dimensional nature of sexism as a construct containing both a subtler and a more blatant form has received recent attention (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1999; Glick & Fiske, 1996). Sexism as a trait is generally assessed through self-report measures, a few of which include: the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick & Fiske, 1996), the Neosexism Scale (Tougas, Brown, Beaton, & Joly, 1995), and the Modern Sexism Scale and Old-Fashioned Sexism Scale (Swim, Aikin, Hall, & Hunter, 1995). Sexism may also be viewed as a behavior or action and assessed through means such as observation (Yao et al., 2010), how individuals judge others (Glick, Diebold, Bailey-Werner, & Zhu, 1997; Glick et al., 2000; Sibley & Wilson, 2004), and response to sexist behaviors like sexual assault via measures such as the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale, (Burt, 1980).

Sexism can be difficult to define as it can take various forms, yet Glick and Fiske (1996) distinguished between two primary categories of sexism that constitute their multidimensional Ambivalent Sexism Theory. Glick and Fiske's theory is based on the idea that sexism is not simply a general dislike of women but a prejudice consisting of ambivalence. The two coexisting but opposed facets of their sexism model include "benevolent" and "hostile" sexism.

"Hostile sexism is an adversarial view of gender relations in which women are perceived as seeking to control men, whether through sexuality or feminist ideology" (Glick & Fiske, 2001, p. 109). This type of sexism would be indicated on the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI) through endorsing responses such as "feminists are seeking for women to have more power than men" and "when women lose to men in a fair competition, they typically complain about being discriminated against" (Glick & Fiske, 1996, p. 512). In contrast, "benevolent sexism (is) a subjectively favorable, chivalrous ideology that offers protection and affection to women who embrace conventional roles" (Glick & Fiske, 2001, p. 109) and would be indicated by the endorsement of statements on the ASI such as "women should be cherished and protected by men" and "women, as compared to men, tend to have a more refined sense of culture and good taste" (Glick & Fiske, 1996, p. 512). Glick et al. (2000) gathered data in 19 countries and found cross-cultural support for hostile and benevolent sexism as separate and yet correlated constructs.

Regarding societal injustices, Burton (1982) stated, "sexism is the most deep-rooted (psychologically), the most pervasive, the most difficult to perceive, the most resistant to change…" (p. 197). A recent study found that when college women were asked to write about being a woman, 99% of the essays contained spontaneously generated themes related to ambivalent sexism (Fields, Swan, & Kloos, 2010). The main premise of the theory of Ambivalent Sexism is that it is possible for individuals to experience one or both type of sexist feelings toward women. While hostile and benevolent sexism are two different constructs, they are positively correlated (Glick & Fiske, 1996). How can individuals harbor hostile sexism (based on believing women are trying to control men) and benevolent sexism (based on positive

and protective beliefs) simultaneously? In attempting to answer this question, much focus has been given to the element of benevolent sexism that allows for seemingly positive views of women and their protection *if* they conform to traditional gender roles (Glick & Fiske). Glick and Fiske (2011) stated, "Benevolent sexism was the carrot aimed at enticing women to enact traditional roles and hostile sexism was the stick used to punish them when they resisted" (p. 532).

Lee, Glick, and Fiske (2011) cited social realities such as heterosexual's interdependence for reproduction and intimacy, divisions of labor delineated along gender lines, and a world in which males are still primarily dominant. According to Lee et al., these existing social realities encourage men and women to take on ambivalent sexist attitudes as a way of continuing the status quo. Attitudes of gender differentiation are the base of ambivalent sexism theory. These attitudes highlight men's tendencies toward ambition and aggression leading to power whereas women's tendencies are toward caring and warmth leading to more supportive communal roles (Glick & Fiske, 2011). For ambivalent sexist men, this means continuing to remain in power while engaging in heterosexual romantic relationships. In contrast, for ambivalent sexist women this status quo means being quieted through seeming flattery in order to attain protection and affection (Glick & Fiske, 1997; Lee et al.; Sibley & Wilson, 2004).

Women have long been dichotomized into the categories of "Madonna" and "Whore" and placed on either a "pedestal" or in the "gutter" by society (Tavris & Wade, 1984). By categorizing women into "good" and "bad" subtypes, the more hostile sexism can be reserved for those who "deserve" it, whereas the feelings of benevolence can be directed towards more

traditional women (Glick, Diebold, Bailey-Werner, & Zhu, 1997). Compared to non-sexists, ambivalent sexist men were more likely to create subtypes for women and evaluate those subtypes in a more polarized fashion (Glick et al.). Non-traditional subtypes, such as the "career woman," elicited a less favorable evaluation from hostile sexist men compared to nonsexist men whereas the traditional subtype, such as the "homemaker," elicited a more favorable evaluation from benevolent sexist men compared to non-sexists (Glick et al.).

Sibley and Wilson (2004) found that when a woman's sexual behavior was varied in a scenario, male participants' evaluation of her was dependent upon whether she fit a more positive or negative stereotype. They created scenarios that varied only the description of a woman so that her behavior was consistent with a negative (promiscuous) stereotype or a positive (chaste) stereotype. The negative stereotype character "enjoyed casual flings" and "had sexual relations with a number of men" whereas the positive stereotype character "did not enjoy casual flings" and "had sexual relations with relatively few, if any, men" (Sibley & Wilson, p. 690). They found that the negative stereotype elicited increased hostile sexism and decreased benevolent sexism. In contrast, the positive stereotype elicited increased benevolent sexism and decreased hostile sexism (Sibley & Wilson). Although their study varied in that the scenario they used did not lead to sexual assault and their participants were exclusively male, their results support this study's hypothesis that the language used to describe women can impact hostile and benevolent sexism.

An expansion of the coexistence of these two types of sexism includes the premise of a complex power balance between the sexes. Males are often dominant in physical strength and

size whereas women are relied upon for childbearing as well as sexual and emotional needs (Guttentag & Secord, 1983). The expression of benevolent sexism, often taking the form of seemingly complimentary ideas such as "women are nurturing, kind, helpful," serves to imply that women are best suited for familial roles as opposed to more high-status or power-based roles (Glick & Fiske, 2001). This implication allows men to retain the majority of such high-status positions without it being due to obvious sexism. Benevolent sexism often goes unrecognized as a type of sexism, and those who are benevolent sexist are seen more positively than those who display hostile sexism (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005). This "benevolent" sexism can be particularly dangerous as it convinces individuals, as well as society, that this form of seemingly positive sexism is acceptable. While benevolent sexism sounds positive, both constructs of Ambivalent Sexism justify a male-dominated power hierarchy and traditional gender roles thereby maintaining gender inequality (Glick & Fiske, 1997).

Benevolent sexism has a variety of negative effects on the lives of women. Dardenne, Dumont, & Bollier (2007) found that when a job recruiter expressed benevolent sexism, women's job performance was negatively impacted. Performance did not suffer for those in the hostile sexism condition, and the benevolent sexism was so subtle that the participants were not even consciously aware of its presence. Another study using an experimental paradigm in the context of job interviews (Dumont, Sarlet, & Dardenne, 2010) found that when exposed to benevolent sexist comments compared to hostile and neutral comments, women reported more intrusive thoughts during a task and increased their autobiographical memories of incompetence.

Additionally, when woman are primed with benevolent gender beliefs, they were more likely to show less resistance to inequality and more acceptance of the status quo (Jost & Kay, 2005).

Research has supported the idea that women hold benevolent sexists views as well as men (Fischer, 2006; Glick et al., 2000; Glick & Fiske, 2001). Benevolent sexism provides approval and protection for women who behave in gender traditional ways. In order for women to accept these societal standards and receive this approval and protection, they must either adopt benevolent sexist beliefs or tolerate constant cognitive dissonance (Glick et al., 2000). The more traditional cultures are regarding gender roles, the higher the levels of hostile and benevolent sexism for both men and women (Glick & Fiske, 2011). Fischer (2006) found that women who were led to believe that men endorsed negative attitudes toward women displayed more benevolent sexist attitudes when compared to women told either nothing or that men endorsed positive attitudes toward women. A recent content analysis of college women's self-statements found that 61% agreed with benevolent sexism whereas only 7% agreed with hostile sexism (Fields, Swan, & Kloos, 2010). Women who score high in benevolent sexism are more likely to go along with sexist career restrictions from a male romantic partner when those restrictions are presented as protection (Moya, Glick, Exposito, De Lumas, & Hart, 2007). A possible explanation is that adopting the perspective of the dominant group is a form of self-protection (Jackman, 1995). In fact, Glick et al. found that women's benevolent sexism was at least as high as men's in those countries where men's hostile sexism was highest.

Sexism and Language

Feminist social constructionist theories state that social forces such as violence against women, pornography, and sexist language exist to maintain the current patriarchal power structure (Murnen, 2000). Male and female children are perceived, evaluated, and responded to differently from birth (Cloran, 1989). Additionally, the schemas we hold for "male" and "female" are internalized to the point of often being invisible (Cloran). These schemas are more acted out than they are discussed. "Gender becomes a fluid web of socially constructed meanings that form an interpretive guide to one's own beliefs, behaviour, relationships and expression of affect" (Hart, 1996, p. 46). These socially created gender roles often foster perceived inequalities (Hart, 1996) thus contributing to sexism. The impact of these social constructs of gender is great, and language is one modality that plays a large role in their creation (Hart).

Language helps us to organize and make sense of the world as well as share experiences with others (DeLamater & Hyde, 1998). Murnen (2000) stated that language is one way a patriarchal society continues to maintain an unequal power structure. Sexist jokes, humor, and cartoons are part of the language used to communicate gender relations (Murnen). Additionally, Murnen found that when a woman was discussed in a degrading conversation, she was judged less likeable and less intelligent than a woman discussed in a less degrading way. In other words, the language we use and hear matters.

Research on sexist language has largely been based on Whorf's (1941, as cited in Parks & Roberton, 2004) theory that language and behavior are inextricably intertwined. Based on this

theory, the power of language is great in that it serves to shape the conditions of society as well as reveal those conditions (Parks & Roberton). Sexist language can be defined as "words, phrases, and expressions that unnecessarily differentiate between women and men or exclude, trivialize or diminish either gender" (Parks & Roberton, 1998, p. 455). Based on this definition, sexist language could include referring to women as "manipulative," "pouty," or other derogatory labels. These examples of sexist language are overtly sexist and congruent with Glick and Fiske's (1996) definition of hostile sexism. However, sexist language could also be of the more covert variety and include words such as "pure" or "nurturing". This type of language appears favorable, but conveys an expectation of how a woman *should* be and is therefore congruent with benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske). Additionally, using "he" or "she" to refer to individuals in certain occupations or statuses (e.g., "I heard you went to the doctor today, what did *he* say?") is a type of subtle sexist language. Language can be sexist in ways that are either subtle or overt, and may serve as one indicator of an individual's level of sexism.

The use of sexist language has been associated with sex role expectations. For example, when asked to discuss their opinions on the use of sexist language, participants discussed their views on women and their role in society instead of focusing on the language itself (Parks & Roberton, 1998). Additionally, Jacobson and Inski (1985) found that sexist language could be predicted by scores on the Attitudes Toward Women Scale (Spence & Helmreich, 1973). Those who use less sexist language tend to have less traditional sex role perceptions (McMinn et al., 1990). When participants were asked to generate labels for the group "women" that easily come to mind as well as those they most often used, the most common two stated by the sexist group

were "sluts" and "bitches" (Glick et al., 1997). The language one chooses to use can be viewed as a reflection of their internal beliefs and as such, sexist language can be used as an indicator of sexist values.

Gender Stereotypes

Gender stereotypes are one facet of the broader concept of sexism. Stereotypes are "schemas for a particular social group, specifying the attributes that members of the group are perceived to possess" (Cralley & Ruscher, 2010, p. 301). Stereotypes provide quick generalizations of individuals, and stereotypes regarding gender are one of the strongest and most frequently used ways to categorize individuals (Fyock & Stangor, 1994; Stangor, Lynch, Duan, & Glas, 1992). In addition to immediate categorization by gender, individuals often rely on within-gender social subtypes (career woman, nurturer) to classify women (Devine & Baker, 1991; Deaux, Winton, Crowley, & Lewis, 1985; Stangor et al.). The portrayal of gender stereotypes often reinforces the cultural and political power structure (Fiske, Xu, Cuddy, & Glick, 1999). Ambivalent Sexism Theory includes gender differentiation as one element of the theory (Glick & Fiske, 1996). According to this theory, both hostile and benevolent sexist views allow men to maintain dominance. Hostile sexist attitudes describe men as more competent (ambitious, powerful), whereas women are weak (Glick & Fiske). Benevolent sexist attitudes depict women as possessing favorable traits such as caring, nurturing, and sensitive (Glick & Fiske). While these traits are complimentary, they categorize women as best suited for caretaking roles as opposed to more powerful or high status positions (Lee, Fiske, & Glick,

14

2010). Additionally, Glick, Diebold, Bailey-Werner, and Zhu (1997) found that ambivalent

sexists are more likely to categorize women into favorable and unfavorable subtypes.

In an interesting attempt to assess if false memories related to gender stereotypes could

be elicited, Lenton and colleagues (2001) employed the classic Deese-Roediger-McDermott

(DRM; Roediger & McDermott, 1995) word list paradigm using stereotypically male and female

roles. In the classic DRM false memory paradigm, participants read a list of words related to a

particular schema or critical concept. When asked to recall those words, they often falsely

remember the activated but unseen schema (Roediger & McDermott). For example, participants

read or hear words associated with chair such as table, legs, and seat and then falsely recall

having encountered the word "chair" (Roediger & McDermott). Lenton and colleagues exposed

participants to 4 lists of words containing several of the original Roediger and McDermott words

(15 words per list) related to the critical concepts of chair, fruit, window, and sleep. They

modified the paradigm by embedding one list of 15 gender stereotypic male (president, detective,

coach) or female (secretary, nurse, housekeeper) roles in the lists. As predicted, participants who

were exposed to the stereotypical gender roles embedded in the word lists were more likely to

falsely recognize other stereotypical gender roles than were controls (Lenton et al.). The authors

also found that compared to controls, the participants who read the stereotypical female *roles*

(secretary, nurse, housekeeper) were more likely to falsely recognize stereotypical female *traits*

(warm, caring, delicate, sensitive). Further supporting implicit priming, they found that through

speed of responses to stereotype-consistent and inconsistent pairs (librarian-her, engineer-him,

housekeeper-him), exposure to the gender stereotypes in the false memory paradigm was

15

sufficient to prime individuals for a secondary implicit task. Participants who had been exposed to the gender stereotypes in the word list responded significantly faster to stereotype-consistent trials compared to stereotype-inconsistent trials demonstrating a strong implicit gender association with the roles (Lenton, et al.).

The media often portrays traditional gender stereotypes, and this portrayal lends credibility to gender stereotypes (Merskin, 2007). The amount of television viewed by children and adolescents is positively correlated with their tendency to gender-role stereotype (Gunter, 2002). An analysis of prime-time television programming found that men characters were more likely than women characters to work for pay outside the home (Signorielli & Kahlenberg, 2001). Lauzen and colleagues (2008) found that female roles were more interpersonally focused whereas male roles were more work-related. Additionally, a content analyses of video games found that women characters were more likely to be sexualized (Dill & Thill, 2007), more like to be portrayed as non-primary characters, and more likely to be presented in gender-role stereotypes (Burgess, Stermer, & Burgess, 2007).

Priming and Stereotype Activation

Priming "refers to an improved facility for detecting or identifying stimuli based on recent experience with them" (Squire et al., 1993, p. 478). In other words, priming is when previous exposure affects behavior (Roskos-Ewoldsen, Klinger, & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2007). Priming a stimulus (word, image, sound) increases the cognitive accessibility of that concept, and exposure to one stimulus often spreads to cognitively associated material (Stapel, 2011).

Priming can be either implicit or explicit (Hunt & Lamb, 2006; Roehrich & Goldman, 1995; Schacter, 1992). Implicit priming is when individuals' awareness of stimuli or "a stimulus" is minimized or does not appear to be related to the subsequent task (Roehrich & Goldman). Often the connection between tasks is disguised by the researcher to assess priming without awareness. For example, Roehrich and Goldman found that implicitly priming individuals with words related to alcohol (confident, funny, happy, horny, smart, talkative) compared to neutral words using a Stroop task increased the amount of alcohol they consumed in a seemingly unrelated secondary task. In contrast, explicit priming is when individuals' experience with a stimuli and subsequent task appear related and are not disguised (Squire et al.). Physiological measures such as positron emission tomography (PET) and functional MRI further support the differentiation between implicit and explicit priming demonstrating that cortical activity varies with these two types of priming (Schacter & Badgaiyan, 2001; Schacter, Dobbins, & Schnyer, 2004). To ensure that priming occurred in this study, a word-stem completion task and recall task were used (Curran, Schacter, & Bessenoff, 1996; Hamann & Squire, 1996; Schacter, et al.).

Stereotype priming is a type of priming that is focused on activating some information stored in memory related to group category (Cobb & Boettcher, 2007). Stereotypes can be activated with either direct or subtle environmental cues (Banaji, Hardin, & Rothman, 1993; Chiu et al., 1998; Devine, 1989). Once activated, stereotypes may affect the way individuals judge others (Banaji et al.; Banaji & Hardin, 1996; Chiu et al.). In fact, unless the individual has the motivation and mental ability to be aware of the stereotype activation and prevent acting on

17

it, he or she will act on it (Bessenoff & Sherman, 2000; Cralley & Ruscher, 2005; Devine).

Cralley and Ruscher (2005) found that men who rated low in sexism and generally used more

gender-neutral terms were not able to continue using neutral terms when cognitively engaged in

another task and reverted to using terms such as "girl" and "lady." The ability to suppress acting

on stereotypes appears to be consciously controlled whereas the activation of those stereotypes is

more automatic.

Rudman and Borgida (1995) found that subjects implicitly primed with sexist television

commercials (portraying women as sexual objects) demonstrated sexist schema activation by

responding more quickly to sexist words, more slowly to nonsexist words, and were more likely

to interpret ambiguous words as sexist. Additionally, they found that while participants' pretest

sexism levels added to the amount of sexism demonstrated following the priming task, pretest

sexism was not a moderating variable (Rudman & Borgida). In other words, preexisting sexism

levels did not make the difference in whether or not participants responded to sexist priming.

Yao and colleagues (2010) found recent support for sexist priming. Compared to controls, males

who played a sexually-charged video game containing female objectification were more likely to

engage in sexual advances with a confederate as well as react more quickly to sexually

objectifying words describing women (Yao et al.).

Several studies have found that listening to misogynistic rap music serves as priming and

has lead to increased sexism (Johnson, Adams, Ashburn, & Reed, 1995; Wester, Crown,

Quatman, & Heesacker, 1997). Cobb and Boettcher (2007) found that sexism, as measured by

the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI; Glick & Fiske, 1996), was higher for participants

exposed to rap music. Specifically, female participants' ASI scores for benevolent sexism as well as males' benevolent and hostile sexism scores were higher after listening to nonmisogynistic rap compared to controls. Based on their criteria, misogynistic rap included lyrics that endorsed hostility toward women and nonmisogynistic rap did not include overtly sexist lyrics. Interestingly, the stronger effect in this study was found when participants listened to nonmisogynistic rap (compared to controls) as opposed to misogynistic rap music (compared to controls). According to Cobb and Boettcher, "sexist language and imagery are not required for sexism to be activated after exposure to music so long as sexism and the type of music are already linked together in memory" (p. 3028). In other words, rap music increased sexism regardless of the lyrics potentially because the genre is associated with sexism. Additionally, Cobb and Boettcher stated that because nonmisogynistic rap is not as obviously sexist as is misogynistic rap, it may not motivate participants to inhibit their sexist reactions.

While it seems counterintuitive that a more subtle form of priming is stronger than a more direct form, several studies provide support for this phenomenon (Cobb & Boettcher, 2007; Hess, Hinson, & Statham, 2004; Levy, 1996). Individuals have demonstrated an ability to control the impact of age-based stereotypes when they are primed explicitly and more likely to react based on the stereotypes when the priming is implicit (Hess, Hinson, & Statham). In another example, Levy found that the impact of implicit priming on older adults' memory performance task was greater than in the more explicit manipulation.

Studies often use words, pictures, or novel objects to prime information for a later task (Squire, Knowlton, & Musen, 1993). Exposure to a list of words in a memory task is one form

of priming, and can influence judgments about the words even when individuals fail to remember prior exposure (Squire et al., 1993). Additionally, asking participants to make judgments about a word such as rate the likeability of a word (Hamann & Squire, 1996) or count the letters in a word (Åberg & Nilsson, 2001; Froger, Taconnat, Landré, Beigneux, & Isingrini, 2009; Schacter & Buckner, 1998) serves to prime participants. A strong link between stereotype activation and subsequent stereotype application has been found (Bargh, 1999; Devine, 1989).

This study compared two methods of priming and used the terms "implicit" and "explicit" to describe the priming methods. While both were designed to activate sexist schemas and influence participant victim and perpetrator blame ratings after reading a date rape scenario, the implicit and explicit methods differed in their presentation of sexist language. For the implicit priming conditions, participants were asked to count the letters of the target words and to complete word stems with the first word that came to mind. Individuals in the explicit priming conditions were asked to remember the words they saw and were told they would be tested on them later. They were asked to complete the word stems with words they studied instead of the first word that came to mind. Based on previous studies supporting the strength of implicit priming (Cobb & Boettcher, 2007; Hess, Hinson, & Statham, 2004; Levy, 1996), it is predicted that implicit priming effects will be greater than explicit priming effects.

Victim Blaming in Sexual Assault

Sexual assault survivors are often blamed for the assault (Centers for Disease Control, 2008; Finkelhor et al., 1990; Flack et al., 2007; Shapiro & Schwarz, 1997). At least two theories have been suggested as explanations for this blame and both are based on a general need for

cognitive self-protection. The Defensive Attribution Hypothesis (Shaver, 1970) suggests that

observers blame the victim, as opposed to external/situational factors, as a way to deny the

possibility that such an event can happen to them. The more different one can believe the victim

is from oneself, the less likely it is one will be in the same situation, and the less arousal and fear

one experiences (McCaul, Veltum, Boyechko, & Crawford, 1990). The Just World Theory

(Lerner, 1980) is based on individuals' assumption that the world is a fair place. Therefore, if

someone gets raped there must be a good reason for it (McCaul et al.). One example of this

belief in fairness is that victims are held more responsible the more closely they are acquainted

with the perpetrator (Ben-David & Schneider, 2005; Krahé, Temkin, & Bieneck, 2007; Monson,

Langhinrichsen-Rohling, & Binderup, 2000). Both theories allow the individual to retain a sense

of control over what happens to them (Capezza & Arriaga, 2008). In contrast, researchers have

found that individuals high in empathy, or the ability to lower defenses enough to imagine

another's perspective, blame the victim less (Deitz, Littman, & Bentley, 1984; Kanekar, Pinto, &

Mazumdar, 1985).

     Burt (1980) created a set of culturally based false beliefs and attitudes about rape called

"rape myths," and she found that acceptance of these rape myths is associated with traditional

gender role attitudes. Gender expectations of how women "should" appear and behave provide

subtypes of women (Devine, 1989) such as good/bad, traditional/nontraditional, and

chaste/promiscuous (Abrams et al., 2003; Glick & Fiske, 1996). These subtypes may lead to

blame judgments for those women not conforming to the more traditional subtype (Capezza &

Arriaga, 2008). For example, women who are promiscuous or dress sexy are believed to be

more likely to be raped (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). Additionally, victims who were

intoxicated (Schuller & Wall, 1998) or seductively dressed (Whatley, 2005) receive more blame.

Research has found a link between sexism and blame ratings such that sexism towards

women is associated with increased amounts of victim blaming in heterosexual assaults (Abrams

et al., 2003; Bondurant & Donat, 1999; Viki & Abrams, 2002; Yamawaki, 2007) as well as

decreased perpetrator blaming (Yamawaki). Abrams and colleagues (2003) investigated the

relationship between Ambivalent Sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996) and victim blame by asking

participants to read either an acquaintance or stranger rape scenario and then rate how much they

blamed the victim. They found that both facets of Ambivalent Sexism (hostile and benevolent)

were linked to decreased sympathy and increased blame toward victims of sexual assault.

Interestingly, they found that the type of sexism (benevolent/hostile) interacted with the type of

sexual assault scenario (acquaintance/stranger) being evaluated. In the acquaintance rape

condition, individuals high on benevolent sexism blamed the victim more than did those low on

benevolent sexism. In the stranger rape condition, there was not a statistically significant

relationship between benevolent sexism and victim blame (Abrams et al.).

Victim blaming for acquaintance-rape scenarios has been linked to both benevolent and

hostile sexism whereas victim blaming for stranger-rape scenarios has been linked to only hostile

sexism (Abrams et al., 2003; Yamawaki, 2007). Additionally, Viki and Abrams (2002) found

that those participants scoring high on benevolent sexism were more likely to judge a victim of

acquaintance-rape harshly if she was perceived as having an extramarital affair than another

victim in a similar assault scenario. In contrast, Masser, Viki, and Power (2006) found that

although hostile sexism was related to rape proclivity, it was not moderated by victim type. In other words, those scoring high on hostile sexism did not seem to distinguish between subtypes of women as targets. This data further supports Glick and Fiske's distinction between hostile and benevolent sexism. Because both hostile and benevolent sexists blame the victim in acquaintance rape scenarios only, an acquaintance rape scenario will be used in this study.

Gender and Victim Blaming

Just as women can hold sexist beliefs, women can also blame the victims of sexual assault. Cowan (2000) found that women who are hostile toward women and endorse negative stereotypes about women were more likely to blame the victim. Several studies investigating sexism and victim blame have found no difference in participant gender (Abrams et al., 2003; Capezza & Arriaga, 2008; Viki & Abrams, 2002; Viki et al., 2004). Krahé et al. (2007) found that there was no statistically significant difference between men and women's Female Precipitation subscores on the Perceived Causes of Rape Scale (Cowan & Quinton, 1997). In other words, males and females did not differ in their belief that women carried responsibility for being raped (Krahé et al.). In contrast, some studies have found that men do blame rape victims more than women (Chapleau, Oswald, & Russel, 2007; Glick & Fiske, 1996; McCaul et al., 1990). Like men, women are vulnerable to cultural messages conveyed partially through language, and may idealize women who conform to a more traditional gender role (Glick et al., 2000). Due to the strong recent evidence that women can demonstrate sexism as well as victim blaming, this study did not include participant gender as a variable.

Focused Summary of Study

Based on the theory of Ambivalent Sexism, benevolent sexism is particularly important due to its seemingly positive nature. Sexism impacts the lives of women from job pay inequality to relationship expectations and even how women are blamed following a sexual assault. Due to the impact of sexism on women, investigating this more subtle form of sexism is an essential element of sexism research. Sexism can be present as a character trait, but it may also be that generally nonsexist individuals are impacted by the vast sexist messages that permeate American culture such as the language used to describe women. This language may be clearly hostile sexist, such as calling a woman a "bitch" for being assertive. However sexist language may also be more subtle (and "benevolent") such as referring to women as "ladies" or "princesses," which implies certain gender stereotypical expectations. Does exposure to sexist language alone have enough power to alter sexist behavior? Given that sexist language may be used in a way that is more obvious or more subtle, language will be presented in an implicit as well as an explicit format. This study investigated whether exposure to sexist language through an implicit or explicit priming task would impact the degree to which an individual blamed a victim or a perpetrator following date rape.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

1) a. When participants are exposed to hostile sexist language in the implicit priming
condition, their rates of blame toward the victim will be higher compared to controls
exposed only to neutral language in the implicit priming condition.

   b. When participants are exposed to benevolent sexist language in the implicit priming
condition, their rates of blame toward the victim will be higher compared to controls
exposed only to neutral language in the implicit priming condition.

   c. When participants are exposed to hostile sexist language in the implicit priming
condition, their rates of blame toward the perpetrator will be lower compared to controls
exposed only to neutral language in the implicit priming condition.

   d. When participants are exposed to benevolent sexist language in the implicit priming
condition, their rates of blame toward the perpetrator will be lower compared to controls
exposed only to neutral language in the implicit priming condition.

2) a. When participants are exposed to hostile sexist language in the explicit priming
condition, their rates of blame toward the victim will be higher compared to controls
exposed to only neutral language in the explicit priming condition.

   b. When participants are exposed to benevolent sexist language in the explicit priming
condition, their rates of blame toward the victim will be higher compared to controls
exposed to only neutral language in the explicit priming condition.

c. When participants are exposed to hostile sexist language in the explicit priming condition, their rates of blame toward the perpetrator will be lower compared to controls exposed to only neutral language in the explicit priming condition.

d. When participants are exposed to benevolent sexist language in the explicit priming condition, their rates of blame toward the perpetrator will be lower compared to controls exposed to only neutral language in the explicit priming condition.

3) a. When participants are exposed to hostile sexist language in the implicit priming condition, their rates of blame toward the victim will be higher compared to participants exposed to hostile sexist language in the explicit priming condition.

b. When participants are exposed to benevolent sexist language in the implicit priming condition, their rates of blame toward the victim will be higher compared to participants exposed to benevolent sexist language in the explicit priming condition.

c. When participants are exposed to hostile sexist language in the implicit priming condition, their rates of blame toward the perpetrator will be lower compared to participants exposed to hostile sexist language in the explicit priming condition.

d. When participants are exposed to benevolent sexist language in the implicit priming condition, their rates of blame toward the perpetrator will be lower compared to participants exposed to benevolent sexist language in the explicit priming condition.

CHAPTER 4: METHOD

Participants

Participants were individuals who use the website Facebook.com. Snowball sampling was used by the researcher to recruit members from the social networking site. The researcher set up an open group that was accessible to any Facebook member. This group appeared when Facebook members searched for open groups or dissertation research. When members went to the open group, they saw the following:

> "You are invited to participate in a research study to investigate sexual assault blame ratings. The study is being conducted by Lisa S. Lively, M.A., under the direction of Dr. Randolph Pipes, in the Auburn University Department of Special Education, Rehabilitation, Counseling/School Psychology."

They were instructed that if they were interested in learning more about participation, they could click on a link that would take them to Psychdata. Participants who chose to continue to Psychdata then viewed a description of the study per the Information Letter (Appendix 5) and were asked to continue if they consented to participate. Additionally, invitations to participate in the study were sent to other members of open groups that do not contain exclusionary criteria (religion, location, education, etc.) and have at least 200 members. Specifically, invitations were sent to the following groups: Change-The Global Experiment, Friends Support Friends, Social Networking, Three Degrees of Separation-The Experiment, The Derrick Experiment, and Music

Group. Members of these groups were asked to forward the invitation to other interested parties if they desired. Participants were required to be 19 years of age to participate in the study, and were informed that for each completed questionnaire, the researcher would donate one dollar to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center. This organization works to prevent sexual assault as well as assist victims following an assault. An internet-based research tool (Psychdata) was used to collect all data. Participation in this study was voluntary and anonymous. Additionally, participants were asked to fill out a demographics questionnaire to assess gender, ethnic background, sexual orientation, geographic region, and years of education.

The final sample included 191 members of the general population, ranging in age from 19 to 70 (M = 34.82). The sample consisted of 38 individuals who identified as men, 150 individuals who identified as women, 0 individuals who identified as transgender, and 3 individuals who identified as other (not specified). Regarding ethnicity, 166 participants identified as Caucasian, 5 identified as Hispanic/Latino, 3 identified as Asian American, 5 identified as African American, 1 identified as Native American, 3 identified as Biracial, 3 identified as Multiracial, 2 Identified as International (not specified), and 3 identified as other (French/Indian/English, Caucasian/Native American).

Stimulus Materials

Language manipulation. The design of the study called for participants to be exposed to words which were either hostile sexist, benevolent sexist, or neutral. Based on previous published research (Lenton, Blaire, & Hastie, 2001; Roediger & McDermott, 1995), it was determined that there would need to be 15 words in each category (hostile, benevolent, neutral).

Because no formal "hostile" or "benevolent" lists were found in the literature, the lists were created by the author based on Glick and Fiske's (1996) theory of Ambivalent Sexism as well as from Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (1996) questions. Friends and colleagues of the researcher were informally asked to list the words that "came to mind" when they read abbreviated definitions of benevolent and hostile sexism. Hostile sexism was referred to as "Type 1" sexism and defined as "women are seen as seeking to control men either through sexuality or feminism." Benevolent sexism was called "Type 2" sexism and defined as "women are seen as refined, needing protection, and should be put on a pedestal." The phrases used to describe both types of sexism were purposefully vague so as to avoid overly influencing participants asked to generate words. Those words generated by three or more of the 18 participants (3 males, 15 females) were included in the list (Hostile: bitch, cunt, whore, slutty, ball-buster, feminist, butch, manipulative, controlling; Benevolent: sweetheart, darling, princess, motherly, nurturing, fragile). The remaining words were created by the author based on the ASI (Hostile: offended, dramatic, seductive, pouty, tease, demanding; Benevolent: innocent, moral, protected, warm, cherished, refined, helpful, adored, conventional).

The neutral word list consisted of a list of gender-neutral traits taken from Lenton et al. (2001). However, two of the original gender-neutral traits (ethical, sincere) were removed by the author and substituted with "efficient" and "witty." This substitution was due to the possibility that the words "ethical" and "sincere" might not be neutral given the acquaintance rape scenario. The words within the hostile and benevolent sexist lists were ordered based on a random numbers table.

Priming manipulation. Participants were assigned to one of two priming conditions: implicit or explicit. Both priming conditions were designed to expose participants to one of three types of language (hostile sexist, benevolent sexist, neutral). Additionally, exposure to these different types of language was intended to activate schemas congruent with the assigned language condition (hostile sexist, benevolent sexist, neutral). The words used in both priming tasks were those described above. In the implicit priming condition, participants were asked to count and record the number of letters in each of the words. This was done in order to prime participants while minimizing their awareness of the words. In contrast, those in the explicit priming condition were asked to memorize the words and were told they would need to remember the words later in the study. This procedure will be described in greater detail below.

Sexual assault vignette. Acquaintance rape is a sexual assault in which the perpetrator is somehow known, romantically or casually, by the victim (Kilpatrick et al., 1992; Meyer, 1984). The acquaintance-rape scenario for this study was taken from Abrams et al. (2003). Participants in the implicit and explicit conditions were asked to read the same acquaintance rape scenario. In the acquaintance-rape scenario, Kathy and Jason have met at a party prior to the rape. The scenario is as follows:

> Jason and Kathy met and got acquainted at a party thrown by a mutual friend. Since they
> had a lot in common, they spent the night laughing, dancing, talking and flirting with
> each other. At the end of the party, Kathy invited Jason over to her apartment to talk
> some more and have coffee. When they got to her apartment, Kathy started kissing
> Jason. Jason then grabbed Kathy and tried to take her clothes off in order to have sex

with her. At this point Kathy pushed him away and asked him to stop. However, Jason

did not listen to her, and instead used force to hold her down and eventually penetrated

her. (p. 114)

Manipulation check materials. The word stem completion and recall task were

designed as a manipulation check for the implicit and explicit priming tasks. The manipulation

check was designed to ensure that the participants exposed to the language lists (hostile,

benevolent, neutral) had greater cognitive accessibility to these words than did controls. The

word stem completion task was based on language condition (hostile, benevolent, neutral) and

consisted of 20 word stems. These 20 word stems (three letters each—see Appendix 2) were

based on 10 words taken from each list of language words (hostile, benevolent, neutral) as well

as 10 filler words. For example, a participant in the hostile language condition received 10 word

stems from the hostile language list and 10 filler word stems, whereas a participant in the

benevolent language condition received 10 word stems from the benevolent language list and 10

filler word stems. Word stem only participants received all 40 word stem completions including:

10 hostile sexist, 10 benevolent sexist, 10 neutral, and 10 filler words. Word stems were

presented in random order based on a random numbers table.

The 10 word stems were chosen from each language list (hostile, benevolent, neutral) by

the researcher using a random numbers table (Appendix 1). However, those words that could not

be completed to form at least three common English words (http://www.merriam-webster.com)

were omitted from the word stem completion task and replaced by another list word that met the

above criteria. Amongst the language list words that can be completed to form at least three

31

common English words, the words chosen for the word stem completion task (Appendix 2) could be completed with the largest number of common English words (http://www.merriam-webster.com). The 10 filler words were the same for each of the language lists and were chosen randomly from an online list of common adjectives (http://dictionary-thesaurus.com/ Wordlists.html). The filler word stems could also be completed to form at least three common English words. Participants in each language condition were given the same set of word stems such that all participants in the hostile language condition received the same word stems, etc. Participants in all six experimental conditions were asked to recall the words to which they were exposed in the priming manipulation following completion of the word stem task.

Measure

Victim and perpetrator blame can be described as the extent to which an individual holds the victim and the perpetrator, respectively, responsible for the rape (Abrams et al., 2003). Many individuals tend to attribute some degree of blame to both the victim and the perpetrator and the two are not mutually exclusive, so that someone may both blame the victim and perpetrator. Both victim and perpetrator blame were assessed via self-report questions (Appendix 4). Victim blame questions were taken from Abrams et al. as well as from Langhinrichsen-Rohling and Monson (1998) and perpetrator blame questions were taken from Viki et al. (2004). All questions were accompanied by a Likert-type scale with 1= *not at all* to 7=*completely*.

Abrams et al. (2003) original victim blame questions include: "How much do you think Kathy should blame herself for what happened?" "How much control do you think Kathy had over the situation?" "How much control do you think Jason had over the situation?" "How much

32

do you agree Kathy should not have invited Jason over if she did not want to have sex with him?" "Do you think this incident could have been avoided?" and "How much sympathy do you feel for Kathy?" Additionally, Abrams et al. (2003) included the question "Whose fault do you think it is, that things turned out the way they did?" which was measured using a Likert-type scale with Kathy and Jason as the endpoints. The author changed this question so that all Likert-type scale points were anchored by "not at all" (1) and "completely" (7). The modified question was "Do you think it is Kathy's fault things turned out the way they did?" The question "Do you think it is Jason's fault things turned out the way they did?" was included in the perpetrator blame scale by the author. Additionally, the question "How much control do you think Jason had over the situation?" was omitted from the victim blame scale because it is also present on the perpetrator blame scale. The item "How much sympathy do you feel for Kathy?" was reverse coded before the scores were averaged. In other words, a higher number assigned by participants on this question was reversed so that it lowered the overall victim blame score. For example, if a participant indicated a 7 (scale points anchored the same as stated above) for the question "How much sympathy do you feel for Kathy?" they were assigned a score of 1 (instead of 7) for this question.

Three additional victim blame questions were added from Langhinrichsen-Rohling and Monson's Sex-Role Stereotypical Victim Blame Attributions Scale (1998) to obtain a richer picture of victim blame: "How much did Kathy enjoy this situation?" "How obligated was Kathy to engage in sexual relations in this case?" and "How interested was Kathy in having sexual relations?" Langhinrichsen-Rohling and Monson's Scale contained 4 questions and included the question "How

much control did Kathy have in this situation?" However, this question was already included in the victim blame questionnaire from Abrams et al.'s set of victim blame questions. The inclusion of these three additional questions was designed to give a broader perspective of victim blame. According to Langhinrichsen-Rohling and Monson, higher scores on these questions "reflect the endorsement of greater sex-role stereotypical attributions about the victim's blame" (p. 439). Additionally, these questions are phrased differently than the Abrams et al. questions and may capture additional elements of blame as well as increase reliability of the blame questionnaire.

Abrams et al. (2003) found alpha reliability coefficients of .75, .79, and .82 for the victim blame scale across three studies. In support of construct validity, Abrams et al. reported a statistically significant correlation ($p < .01$) between the victim blame questions and the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (Costin, 1985) as well as the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Additionally, Viki and Abrams (2002) also found a statistically significant correlation ($p < .05$) between the victim blame questions and the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale as well as the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory.

The Langhinrichsen-Rohling and Monson Sex-Role Stereotypical Victim Blame Attributions Scale (1998) has an alpha reliability coefficient of .64. However, because only three of the four Sex-Role Stereotypical Victim Blame Attributions Scale questions were used, the reliability is unknown. All 9 victim blame questions were included and averaged for a victim blame score. However, due to the unacceptable reliability of the Sex-Role Stereotypical Victim Blame Attributions Scale (Langhinrichsen-Rohling & Monson), the original six victim blame questions (Abrams et al.) were analyzed separately as well as part of the total victim blame score.

34

Additionally, the three questions from the Sex-Role Stereotypical Victim Blame Attributions Scale were analyzed for reliability in this study separate from the total 9 victim blame questions as well as part of the total victim blame score.

Perpetrator blame was assessed with questions taken from Viki et al. (2004) (Appendix 4). Perpetrator blame questions were in the same 7-point Likert-type format as the victim blame questions and included: "How much control do you think Jason had over the situation?" "How much do you think Jason should blame himself for what happened?" "How much sympathy do you feel for Jason?" and "Do you agree that Jason should not have expected Kathy to have sex with him?" The author added the question "Do you think it is Jason's fault things turned out the way they did?" The question "How much sympathy do you feel for Jason?" was reverse coded. Viki et al. (2004) attained an alpha reliability coefficient of .65 for the original perpetrator blame scale. The five perpetrator blame questions were averaged to provide a perpetrator blame score (Viki et al., 2004).

Victim and perpetrator blame questions were presented as one set of questions (14 questions total). Questions were counterbalanced and two forms of the questionnaire were administered to account for order effects. The questions alternated so that one question was about Kathy and the next about Jason, etc. Additionally, one form of the questionnaire began with a question about Kathy (form A) and one began with a question about Jason (form B). The presentation of alternating victim and perpetrator blame questions together as well as the alternating format was designed to make the purpose of the study less obvious.

Procedure

The author obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board. Permission was also obtained from Lenton et al. to use their neutral sexist list, from Langhinrichsen-Rohling and Monson to use their three victim blame questions, and from Abrams et al. to use their rape scenario and six blame questions. All participant data was collected electronically. After participants read and gave informed consent, they were asked to fill out a basic demographics questionnaire.

Participants were then randomly assigned to one of two priming conditions (implicit or explicit) and one of three language conditions (hostile, benevolent, neutral). Participants were not aware of the conditions, and were randomly assigned using the computer program Psychdata. There were not an equal number of participants in each group due to the method Psychdata uses to randomly assign participants. As participants followed the link to the study, they were randomly assigned to a condition, and Psychdata attempted to balance these numbers. However, given that the final number of participants is not known at the start of the study (but is based on how many participants can be recruited in a certain amount of time), it is not possible for Psychdata to ensure an equal number of participants in each group.

Based on this design, there were six between-subject experimental conditions (implicit-hostile, implicit-benevolent, implicit-neutral, explicit-hostile, explicit-benevolent, explicit-neutral). There was one additional group of participants that was not exposed to any of the three language conditions. This group was only asked to complete the demographic questionnaire and

the word-stem manipulation check (described above). This group provided baseline data for the word-stem manipulation task.

For all participants, the amount of time spent completing the materials was evaluated. A criterion was set so that participants with an average response rate of 2 standard deviations above or below the response rate mean for their condition would be eliminated from the data analysis. Based on this criterion, those participants who spent more or less time than the mean response speed were eliminated due to the likelihood that they were not following the directions of the study based on their response time. There were no participants who met this criterion and thus no one was eliminated from the data analysis based on this criterion. However, there were twenty-two participants who began but did not complete the study. These twenty-two participants were eliminated from the data analysis. There were too few participants who began but did not complete the study to conduct a chi square analysis to compare dropout rates by condition.

Implicit Priming Condition

In the implicit priming conditions, participants were given the following instructions: You will be presented with a series of words. For each word, you will be asked to count the number of letters and use the number keys [on your computer] to indicate your answer. For example, if the word were 'letters,' you would press the number key '7.' After pressing the number key to indicate your answer, please click 'Continue.'

After clicking 'Continue,' participants were taken to a new screen that contained abbreviated instructions and the first word of the task. The abbreviated instructions stated, "Please enter the

number of letters in this word. Click 'Continue' when you are finished." This procedure was repeated for each of the 15 words of their assigned language condition. The words for participants in the implicit condition were based on their randomly assigned language condition (hostile, benevolent, neutral). Thus participants received one of three language types (as described above).

Participants were then asked to complete a series of word stems. For each word stem, participants were given the first three letters and were asked to complete the word. Instructions stated,

> You will be presented with a series of words that are not complete. Please complete the word with the FIRST ENGLISH WORD that comes to mind. Please enter the completed word in the space provided. For example, if you are presented with 'let___,' you may choose to complete the word to make 'letters.' You should type 'letters' in the space provided. You may complete the word stem with ONLY ONE WORD. Please do the same for each word stem. Please click 'Continue' when you have finished each word.

After clicking 'Continue,' participants saw the following abbreviated instructions, "Please complete the word with the FIRST ENGLISH WORD that comes to mind. Please click 'Continue' when you are finished." Participants were then given their first word stem. This procedure was repeated for each of the word stems of their assigned language condition. Data from this task served as a manipulation check and will be described below. Participants were then given a recall task in which they saw a new screen and were instructed to "Please type the words you can remember from the previous list of words in which you were asked to count the

number of letters. Please click 'Continue' when you are finished." Data from the recall task also

served as part of the manipulation check, which will be described below.

Explicit Priming Condition

In the explicit priming conditions, instructions for what to do with the word list and

directions on how to complete the word stems varied from the implicit condition. Participants

read:

> You will be presented with a series of words. Please read each word and try to remember
>
> the words you are about to see because you will be tested on these words later. Please
>
> click 'Continue' when you feel you have learned the word and are ready to move to the
>
> next word.

After clicking 'Continue,' participants were taken to a new screen that contained abbreviated

instructions and the first word of the task. The abbreviated instructions stated, "Please click

'Continue' when you feel you have learned the word and are ready to move to the next word."

This procedure was repeated for each of the 15 words of their assigned language condition. The

words for participants in the explicit condition were based on their randomly assigned language

condition (hostile, benevolent, neutral). Thus participants received one of three language types

(as described above).

Participants were then asked to complete a series of word stems. For each word stem,

participants were given the first three letters and were asked to complete the word. Instructions

stated,

You will be presented with a series of words that are not complete. Some word stems can

be completed with words from the list you were asked to remember and some cannot. If

possible, please complete the word with ONE FROM THE LIST YOU WERE ASKED

TO REMEMBER. If that is not possible, please complete the word with any word you

choose. Please enter the completed word in the space provided. For example, if you are

presented with 'let___,' you may choose to complete the word to make 'letters.' You

should type 'letters' in the space provided. You may complete the word stem with

ONLY ONE WORD. Please do the same for each word stem. Please click 'Continue'

when you have finished each word.

After clicking 'Continue,' participants saw the following abbreviated instructions: "Please

complete the word with ONE FROM THE LIST YOU WERE ASKED TO REMEMBER. If

that is not possible, please complete the word with any word you choose. Please click

'Continue' when you are finished." Participants were then presented with their first word stem.

This procedure was repeated for each of the 20 word stems of their assigned language condition.

Data from this task served as a manipulation check and will be described below. Participants

were then asked to complete a recall task. They saw a new screen and were asked to "Please

type the words you can remember from the previous list of words you were asked to remember.

Please click 'Continue' when you are finished." Data from the recall task also served as part of

the manipulation check which is described below.

Implicit and Explicit Priming Conditions

Following the completion of the recall task, participants in all six experimental groups read

The first task of the experiment is complete and you will be moving to the second task. Please pause now for 30 seconds. Please look at a clock or count to 30 if a clock is not nearby. After 30 seconds have passed, please click 'Continue.'

After clicking 'Continue,' they were given the acquaintance rape scenario and were instructed to "Please read the scenario very carefully. You will be asked to answer some questions about the scenario and will not be able to return to reread the scenario. Please click 'Continue' when you have finished." After clicking "Continue," participants were asked to "Please answer the following questions about the scenario you just read. Please click the answer that BEST represents your opinion." They also read, "On a scale of 1–7 where 1 equals 'Not at All' and 7 equals 'Completely,' please indicate which response BEST represents your opinion for the following questions." Due to proposed sexist schema activation, participants read a debriefing statement following participation (Appendix 6).

Word Stem Only

Those participants who were randomly assigned to the word stem only condition were given the information letter to read and asked to complete the demographic questionnaire. They were not exposed to the word list task prior to completing the word stems. After reading the information letter and filling out the demographic questionnaire, they were given the same instructions to complete the word stem task as the implicit condition participants. Instructions stated,

> You will be presented with a series of words that are not complete. Please complete the word with the FIRST ENGLISH WORD that comes to mind. Please enter the completed word in the space provided. For example, if you are presented with 'let___,' you may choose to complete the word to make 'letters.' You should type 'letters' in the space provided. You may complete the word stem with ONLY ONE WORD. Please do the same for each word stem. Please click 'Continue' when you have finished each word."

After clicking 'Continue,' participants saw the following abbreviated instructions "Please complete the word with the FIRST ENGLISH WORD that comes to mind. Please click 'Continue' when you are finished." Participants were then given the first word stem. This procedure was repeated for each word stem. Following the completion of the word stems, participants read the debriefing statement and appreciation for their participation. Word stem only participants did not receive the word list task, the recall task, the sexual assault scenario, or the Blame Questionnaire

Manipulation Check

      The word stem completion task served as a manipulation check for the six experimental conditions. This task was designed to confirm that participants were primed with the language list words to which they were implicitly or explicitly exposed. Following the implicit (counting letters) or explicit (asked to remember) language exposure, participants were given the word stem completion task. A correct word stem response was defined by completing the word stem with a word from the participant's assigned language list. For the word stem only control group, a correct word stem response was defined by completing the word stem with a word from the language lists. The number of correct word stem responses of participants in each condition was compared to the word stem responses of the word stem only group. If the priming was successful, then the participants in the language conditions (hostile, benevolent, neutral) should complete the word stems with their language list words significantly more than those in the word stem only group. Additionally, the recall task was part of the manipulation check in that recall scores were compared between implicit and explicit groups. It was expected that those in the explicit priming conditions would recall their language list words more than those in the implicit priming conditions (for results of the manipulation check, see "Manipulation Check" immediately below in the RESULTS chapter).

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

Manipulation Check

Word Stem Data

Six separate t-tests were used to compare each experimental group (implicit/hostile, implicit/benevolent, implicit/neutral, explicit/hostile, explicit/benevolent, explicit/neutral) to the baseline word stem only control group while controlling for experiment-wise error rate using a Bonferroni correction (α = .05/6). Specifically, the number of correct word stem responses in each assigned group was compared to the number of correct word stem responses in the corresponding word stem only group (hostile stem responses in the hostile group compared to hostile stem responses in the word stem only group, etc.). Word stem responses that were not completed (left blank), or those completed with a non-list word were considered incorrect. Incorrect responses were not used in the data analysis. All results were statistically significant at the less than .001 level (see Table 1) indicating that all participants (those in the hostile, benevolent, and neutral groups) completed significantly more word stems using words from their original exposure list than did participants who completed the word stems without being exposed to the explicit or implicit priming tasks.

Table 1

Comparison of Experimental Group Word Stem Scores to Word Stem Only Scores

	Implicit/ Hostile	Implicit/ Benevolent	Implicit/ Neutral	Explicit/ Hostile	Explicit/ Benevolent	Explicit/ Neutral
n	32	25	29	27	20	26
M, *(SD)*	3.41 (1.663)	4.72 (1.429)	4.86 (1.642)	7.67 (1.494)	8.90 (1.294)	8.00 (1.523)
t	-5.054[a]	-7.192[b]	-7.994[c]	-17.639[a]	-19.867[b]	-17.666[c]
Mean Diff	-1.750[a]	-2.376[b]	-2.675[c]	-6.010[a]	-6.556[b]	-5.813[c]
df	51.890[a]	55[b]	39.159[c]	45.129[a]	50[b]	35.497[c]

Note: Within each row, indices denote: [a] comparison to Word Stem Only Hostile scores, [b] comparison to Word Stem Only Benevolent scores, and [c] comparison to Word Stem Only Neutral scores. All results are statistically significant at the $p < .001$ level.

Recall Data

The implicit (n = 85, $M = 3.410$, $SD = 2.083$) and explicit (n = 72, $M = 6.260$, $SD = 3.560$) experimental conditions were compared on recall scores using an independent samples *t*-test. Levene's test for inequality of variances revealed that the assumption of homogeneity of variance was violated, $F(1, 155) = 17.837$, $p < .001$, so equal variances were not assumed. Using the SPSS robust estimate for equality of variance violated, results revealed a statistically significant difference between the two groups, $t (110.315) = -5.985$, $p < .001$. The expectation

that the implicit and explicit experimental groups would differ significantly on recall scores was confirmed. The explicit experimental groups had statistically significant higher recall scores than the implicit experimental groups. The above results of the manipulation check indicated that the priming manipulation was successful and participants were primed via the word list exposure task.

Dependent Variables

Before assessing assumptions for MANOVA, analyses were run to see if ordering affected answers on either dependent variable. An independent samples t-test was used to detect a statistically significant difference in the blame victim scale depending on type of order. Questions were counterbalanced and two forms of the questionnaire were administered to account for order effects. The questions alternated so that one question was about Kathy and the next about Jason, etc. Additionally, one form of the questionnaire began with a question about Kathy (form A) and one began with a question about Jason (form B). Levene's Test was not significant, $F(1, 157) = 2.983$, p = .086, meaning the assumption of homogeneity was not violated. Thus, equal variance was assumed across groups. Results of the t-test revealed no statistically significant difference between victim blame scores in the two different ordering categories: $t(157) = -7.11$, p = .478. The same analyses were then run to check for an ordering effect for the perpetrator blame scale. In this case, Levene's test was statistically significant, $F(1, 157) = 7.905$, p = .006, meaning the assumption of homogeneity was violated. Thus, equal variances were not assumed. Again, the t-test revealed no statistically significant difference

between perpetrator blame scores in the two different ordering categories, $t(110.359) = -1.616$, p

= .109.

Next, Cronbach's alpha was used to estimate the internal consistency (i.e., reliability) of

the two dependent variables. The blame measure contained nine victim blame questions and five

perpetrator blame questions. Because three victim blame questions were included that had

Cronbach's alpha of .64 in the original study from which they were taken (Langhinrichsen-

Rohling & Monson, 1998), these were analyzed separately as well as part of the full nine-

question victim blame questionnaire. In this study, the three Langhinrichsen-Rohling and

Monson victim blame questions had a Cronbach's alpha of .600. The six Abrams et al. (2003)

victim blame questions had a Cronbach's alpha of .825. For the nine victim blame questions,

Cronbach's alpha was estimated at .847. For the perpetrator blame scale, Cronbach's alpha was

estimated at .709. Thus, both scales had internal consistency estimates higher than the minimum

.7 usually considered necessary for experimental research (Heppner, Wampold, & Kivlighan,

2008).

Regarding convergent validity, the full victim blame measure was correlated to the

perpetrator blame (Pearson's r (154) = .454, $p < .001$) measure at a slightly higher level than the

six-question victim blame measure (Pearson's r =.409, $p < .001$). This relationship is negative

but is shown here as a positive correlation due to the reverse scoring of the perpetrator blame

scores during transformation (described below). Based on the above, all nine of the victim

blame questions were included in the data analysis. Descriptive statistics for the dependent

variables listed in Table 2.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Victim Blame and Perpetrator Blame Score

		Victim Blame			Perpetrator Blame		
Group	n	M	SD	Std. Error	M	SD	Std. Error
Implicit/Hostile	32	23.81	8.682	1.535	31.09	4.453	.787
Implicit/Benevolent	25	21.92	7.251	1.450	32.92	2.178	.436
Implicit/Neutral	29	24.07	9.388	1.743	31.55	4.058	.754
Explicit/Hostile	27	23.89	10.725	2.064	31.19	4.699	.904
Explicit/Benevolent	20	22.75	9.124	2.040	31.70	4.143	.927
Explicit/Neutral	26	23.00	8.708	1.742	31.63	4.072	.324

MANOVA Assumptions

Both of the dependent variables (victim blame, perpetrator blame) were significantly skewed which violates the normality assumption of a multivariate analysis of variance. Raw dependent variable scores were transformed using natural log scores to achieve normality. Additionally, in order for both dependent variables to be transformed in the same way, perpetrator blame scores were reverse scored. Following transformation, the victim blame scores had a skew of .139 and a kurtosis of -.658, and perpetrator blame scores had a skew of .181 and a kurtosis of -1.071, which are acceptable for continuing with MANOVA. The two dependent variables were moderately correlated, Pearson's r (154) = .454, $p < .001$. Again, this correlation is negative but is shown here as positive due to the reverse scoring of the perpetrator blame

scores during transformation. Research suggests that MANOVA is well-suited for studies with dependent variables that are either highly negatively correlated or moderately correlated in either direction (Cole, Maxwell, Arvey, & Salas, 1993; Field, 2005; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).

Levene's test for equality of variances was not significant for either victim blame, $F(5, 150) = 1.265$, $p = .282$ or perpetrator blame, $F(5, 150) = 1.181$, $p = .321$, meaning that the assumption of homogeneity of variance was not violated at a statistically significant level. Box's M test of homogeneity was also not significant $M = 10.171$, $F(15, 96322.778) = .655$, $p = .831$, providing further evidence that the assumption was met.

MANOVA Results

A two-way 3 (hostile, benevolent, neutral) x 2 (implicit, explicit) MANOVA revealed no statistically significant main effects for type of word presentation (implicit versus explicit), Wilks' $\lambda = .999$, $F(2, 150) = .039$, $p = .962$ (see Table 3). There were also no statistically significant main effects for type of word list (hostile, benevolent, neutral), Wilks' $\lambda = .988$, $F(4,300) = .460$, $p = .765$. Additionally, no statistically significant interaction effects were found between the two factors (type of word presentation, type of word list), Wilks' $\lambda = .997$, $F(4,300) = .123$, $p = .974$. Because the MANOVA revealed no statistically significant differences for either of the factors, it was not necessary to conduct post hoc analyses. Thus, none of the hypotheses were supported.

Table 3

Results of two-way MANOVA

Effect	Λ	F	df	Sig.
Priming	.999	.039	2, 150	.962
Language	.988	.460	4,300	.765
Priming x Language	.997	.123	4,300	.974

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

This chapter will discuss the implications of the results presented in the last chapter. First, the findings related to the hypotheses will be discussed in regards to their relationship to previous literature. Next, limitations of the study will be presented. Lastly, implications and recommendations for future research will be discussed.

This study investigated the effects of exposure to different types of language on blame ascribed to the victim and perpetrator following an acquaintance-based sexual assault scenario. Past research has indicated that there is a relationship between self-reported sexism and victim/perpetrator blame (Abrams, Viki, Masser, & Bohner, 2003; Bondurant & Donat, 1999; Viki & Abrams, 2002; Yamawaki, 2007). Specifically, past research has measured sexism via a self-report inventory and looked at the relationship between sexism "scores" and victim/perpetrator blame.

This study is unique in that the experimental design was an attempt to alter blame scores by increasing sexism temporarily through priming. Past research regarding priming indicates that when primed with certain words, we are more likely to act on those words with or without our conscious awareness (Bush & Geer, 2001; Chiu et al., 1998; Cobb & Boettcher, 2007; Cralley & Ruscher, 2005; Lauzen, Dozier, & Horan 2008; Lenton, Blair, & Hastie, 2003; Rudman & Borgida, 1995; Schacter, 1987; Yao, Mahood, & Linz, 2010). The main purpose of this study was to draw on the priming and sexism literature to investigate how differential

exposure to two forms of sexist language via priming would alter how much a participant blamed

the victim and the perpetrator of a sexual assault scenario. Results indicated that although

participants were successfully primed with the sexist language, there was no statistically

significant difference in blame ratings between groups based on language.

Manipulation Check

The manipulation check showed that the implicit and explicit priming tasks successfully

primed the participants. Priming "refers to an improved facility for detecting or identifying

stimuli based on recent experience with them" (Squire et al., 1993, p. 478). However, it must be

recognized that even though true to this definition, the manipulation check itself was in fact weak

because despite priming for the words, it is not known whether or not sexism was activated.

Specifically, individuals who were exposed to a list of words (hostile, benevolent, neutral) were

more likely to complete word-stems with those same words than were participants who were not

primed. This outcome supports research that priming in one task can affect performance on

another (Curran, Schacter, & Bessenoff, 1996; Hamann & Squire, 1996; Jacoby, Toth, &

Yonelinas, 1993; Roskos-Ewoldsen, Klinger, & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2007; Schacter et al., 2004;

Squire et al., 1993), although priming in this study had no statistically significant effect on scores

on an implied measure of sexism (assignment of blame).

Regarding recall, participants in the explicit priming condition were able to recall

significantly more words from the list to which they had been exposed than did those in the

implicit priming condition. Although those who are implicitly primed may not be able to

consciously recall the words to which they have been exposed, they still exhibit a preference for

those primed words in a more subtle (word stem completion) task (Hunt & Lamb, 2006; Roehrich & Goldman, 1995; Schacter et al., 2004). These results suggest that when exposed to the words used in this study (hostile, benevolent, neutral) through one of two priming tasks (implicit, explicit), participants were more able to respond to a word stem task using the words with which they were primed than were controls. In other words, the language was more cognitively accessible for experimental participants than for controls. While in this study priming seemed to have no effect beyond the completion of a word stem task and a recall task, it is not known if exposure to the sexist language will affect participants in other ways not assessed in this study.

Hypotheses

There are always an infinite number of possible explanations for why hypotheses are not supported in a research study. Such explanations include inadequate reliability, a small number of participants, restricted ranges, weak manipulations, etc. The first set of hypotheses stated that in an *implicit* priming paradigm, participants exposed to either hostile sexist or benevolent sexist language would blame the victim more, and the perpetrator less, than those participants who were exposed to neutral (non-sexist) language. The results of this study did not support this hypothesis. There was no statistically significant difference between those participants exposed to neutral language versus those exposed to either hostile or benevolent sexist language in an implicit priming paradigm.

The second set of hypotheses stated that in an *explicit* priming paradigm, participants exposed to either hostile sexist or benevolent sexist language would blame the victim more, and

the perpetrator less, than those participants who were exposed to neutral language. Again, the results of this study did not support this hypothesis. There was no statistically significant difference between those participants exposed to neutral language versus those exposed to either hostile or benevolent sexist language in an explicit priming paradigm.

The third set of hypotheses stated that participants exposed to either hostile sexist or benevolent sexist language in an implicit priming paradigm would blame the victim more, and the perpetrator less, than those participants in an explicit priming paradigm. The results of this study did not support this hypothesis. There was no statistically significant difference found between implicit and explicit conditions regarding victim or perpetrator blame.

This study differed from past research regarding sexism and sexual assault blame in that it did not compare self-reports of sexism but attempted to elicit a sexist response (measured by blame ratings) from participants through exposure to sexist language. Previous research has supported a link between exposure to gender stereotypes and subsequent sexist schema activation (Banaji et al., 1993; Banji & Hardin, 1996; Lenton et al., 2001). Additionally, there is much evidence that exposure to sexist language through rap music (Cobb & Boettcher, 2007; Johnson, Adams, Ashburn, & Reed, 1995; Wester, Crown, Quatman, & Heesacker, 1997), television commercials (Rudman & Borgida, 1995), and video games (Yao et al., 2010) leads to increased sexist responses in participants. While the implicit and explicit tasks in this study did cause priming in participants, this priming did not appear to be sufficient to affect sexism as measured by blame ratings.

It appears as though one-time exposure to sexist words is not enough to alter scores on a measure of sexism. Although contrary to prediction, this finding is reassuring in one sense in that it indicates an individual's history of sexism as a trait is more powerful than brief exposure to sexist language. Thus, it would perhaps not be a good thing if individuals who are non-sexist or mildly sexist could be influenced to engage in behavior related to sexism based solely on brief exposure to sexist words. Although the results of this study were non-significant, the study was not designed to test the cumulative effect of exposure to sexist language. This study supports the idea that sexist language can be primed, in that the words that were implicitly or explicitly primed were more cognitively accessible. Given that accessibility, it is possible that exposed individuals go on to incorporate these words into their language more than they would have prior to the exposure. It is also possible that continued use of the language may have more long-term effects. Although one-time exposure to sexist language did not alter sexism, it is possible that there is a threshold for exposure at which sexism would be affected. Another way of saying this is that the manipulation in this study may have been too weak. Future research should explore if there is a point at which exposure to language does in fact alter sexist behavior.

An additional explanation for why this relationship was not supported in this study may be the acquaintance-based sexual assault scenario that was selected. Specifically, the ambiguity necessary to elicit victim blame (and decrease perpetrator blame) from those in the benevolent sexist condition may not have been present in the scenario. It is possible that the language of the assault scenario left little room for variance in victim and perpetrator blame. Specifically, while a more ambiguous scenario may not alter blame ratings for those in the neutral or hostile

conditions, previous research has in fact supported the idea that the details of scenarios do influence blame ratings for those who are benevolent sexist.

In this study, it appeared as though most participants blamed the perpetrator and did not blame the victim. However, in previous research (Abrams et al., 2003) that used this scenario to assess the relationship between sexism as a trait and victim/perpetrator blame, there was more variability regarding blame scores. Certainly, blaming the perpetrator and not the victim is a positive outcome. However, it may not accurately reflect the opinions of the larger population since acquaintance-based sexual assault scenarios are often more ambiguous than the scenario used in this study. Perhaps all acquaintance-based relationships are not equal regarding victim and perpetrator blame do to the possibility that length of time and level of relationship may affect blame ratings. For example, sexual assault perpetrators are often friends or partners of the victim, which tends to increase victim blame and decrease perpetrator blame (Bridges & McGrail, 1989; Pollard, 1992; Vicki, Abrams, & Masser, 2004). In the scenario used in this study, the perpetrator was someone the victim met the same night of the incident as opposed to a friend or dating partner. Additionally, previous research has often included detailed victim characteristics such as dress, use of alcohol, and sexual history to assess variations in blame and has found that with those who score high on benevolent sexism, victim characteristics matter (Masser, Lee, & McKimmie, 2010; Viki & Abrams, 2002). The current study also did not include victim variables.

Past research that used this sexual assault scenario (Abrams et al., 2003; Viki & Abrams, 2002) looked at the relationship between self-reported sexism and blame ratings. In contrast, this

study treated sexism not as a trait, but rather as a condition which might be manipulated, thereby producing between-group differences in blame ratings. Unfortunately the manipulation failed to produce the predicted results. It is possible that the victim blame and perpetrator blame questionnaires were not sensitive enough to pick up on the subtle differences in blame ratings among participants particularly in that they were designed for use in studies examining sexism as a trait.

This study attempted to elicit sexism using sexist language. The sexist language used was in a word list format where participants were asked to either memorize the words or count the letters in the words. It may be that the sexist language out of context was not enough to elicit sexist responding to an assault scenario. In order to elicit sexist responding as measured by attribution of victim and perpetrator blame, the sexist language may need to be in context. For example, using the derogatory language to describe the victim directly as opposed to using those words in a list fashion may increase the likelihood of seeing changes in victim or perpetrator blame. Another way of saying this is that the manipulations used were likely very weak when it comes to altering complex behavior.

One assumption of the priming theory is that concepts such as sexism can be activated cognitively, which then may activate an underling schema or activate concepts that are associated with sexism. One potential problem with priming is that when a word or concept is activated, the specific associations that are also activated are difficult to isolate (Staple, 2011). In this study, it is possible that through exposure to sexist language, any number of concepts may have been activated that are not related to victim or perpetrator blame (woman, crime, injustice,

57

religion, etc.). This study was not able to provide evidence that "sexism" as a concept was activated and did not provide any support for the idea that exposure to sexist language produces sexist behavior. The study certainly does not disconfirm such a possibility, but rather, merely fails to support the idea.

Limitations

One limitation of this study is the generalizability of the results based on the sample. One example of this limitation is that data was collected exclusively via the Internet. Therefore, those who did not have computer access were not included in this sample. However, research collected via the Internet does not necessarily significantly differ from that collected through other methods (Kraut et al., 2004). Although participants did not have to be Facebook users to participate, Facebook was used to recruit participants and may have created a more homogeneous sample than if participants were recruited from multiple Internet sites. Additionally, given the sensitive nature of the topic, individuals may have self-selected to participate or avoid participation in the study based on the title. This may have encouraged individuals who are interested in sexism, sexual assault, or victim blaming to participate which again may create a more homogeneous sample. Participants were told in the Information Letter "for each participant one dollar will be donated to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center." This statement may have encouraged individuals to continue with their participation when they would have naturally chosen to avoid participation or discontinue participation. Each of these limitations suggests a possible restriction of range and decreased generalizability of results.

The methodology of this study has some limitations and may have contributed to the lack of statistically significant results. As mentioned previously, the acquaintance based sexual assault scenario may not have been ambiguous enough to allow for sufficient variation in victim and perpetrator blame. Additionally, the victim and perpetrator blame questions may not have been sensitive enough given that in this study the author was attempting to elicit changes in blame ratings as opposed to measuring existing sexism. Assessing changes in responding based on language conditions may require a more sensitive measure than one designed to measure sexism as a trait. Lastly, because no baseline measure of tendency to blame the victim versus the perpetrator was used, it may be that participants' victim and perpetrator blame was altered but not enough to detect without a baseline measure.

Recommendations for Future Research

Due to the significant effect that sexist language as well as victim blame has on the lives of women and men, more research needs to be conducted to explore the link between these two concepts. Past research has been primarily focused on measuring existing sexism and its link with victim blame. More studies using an experimental method to see if sexism can be elicited are needed. This study used an exclusively visual method of presenting benevolent and hostile sexist language out of context. Presenting sexist language in a variety of formats including audio, video, and music in order to compare the effects of these types of presentations may broaden our understanding of the impact of sexist language. Specifically, continuing to explore the impact of benevolent sexist language on victim blame is important because of the seemingly innocuous nature of benevolent sexism. Additionally, exploring the effect of both hostile and

benevolent sexist language when it is directly applied to the victim but not necessarily related to the sexual assault may expand the current research on language and victim blame.

An additional recommendation is to explore elicited sexism by including a pre and post measure of sexism. In this study, the victim and perpetrator blame measure served as an indicator of sexism. However, it may be that including a more general measure of sexism may detect subtle shifts in sexism that the blame measure was not designed to assess. Perhaps including a pre and post sexism measure in addition to the blame measure would provide a clearer picture of the effect of benevolent and hostile language. It would also be beneficial to include a qualitative assessment of individuals' reactions to exposure to the sexist language in order to highlight possible elements not captured by a blame measure.

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Appendix 1

Language Lists

Hostile Sexist	Benevolent Sexist	Neutral
butch	innocent	funny
offended	princess	earnest
dramatic	nurturing	articulate
ball-buster	moral	talented
feminist	conventional	honest
manipulative	protected	efficient
seductive	sweetheart	adaptable
controlling	motherly	happy
whore	warm	candid
pouty	cherished	punctual
bitch	darling	normal
slutty	refined	truthful
demanding	helpful	enthusiastic
cunt	fragile	witty
tease	adored	creative

Word Stem Completion List Based on Language List

butch   but_____
offended   off_____
dramatic   dra_____
manipulative   man_____
seductive   sed_____
whore   who_____
pouty   pou_____
slutty   slu_____
demanding   dem_____
tease   tea_____

innocent   inn_____
princess   pri_____
moral   mor_____
darling   dar_____
sweetheart   swe_____
motherly   mot_____
warm   war_____
nurturing   nur_____
refined   ref_____
fragile   fra_____

funny   fun_____
earnest   ear_____
articulate   art_____
honest   hon_____
candid   can_____
punctual   pun_____
truthful   tru_____
enthusiastic   ent_____
witty   wit_____
creative   cre_____

Word Stem Completion Filler Words

cheerful	che_____
outrageous	out_____
disgusting	dis_____
bashful	bas_____
proud	pro_____
confused	con_____
active	act_____
monstrous	mon_____
skeptical	ske_____
tough	tou_____

Appendix 3

Sexual Assault Vignette

Jason and Kathy met and got acquainted at a party thrown by a mutual friend. Since they had a lot in common, they spent the night laughing, dancing, talking and flirting with each other. At the end of the party, Kathy invited Jason over to her apartment to talk some more and have coffee. When they got to her apartment, Kathy started kissing Jason. Jason then grabbed Kathy and tried to take her clothes off in order to have sex with her. At this point Kathy pushed him away and asked him to stop. However, Jason did not listen to her, and instead used force to hold her down and eventually penetrated her.

Appendix 4

Victim and Perpetrator Blame Questionnaire (Form A)

Please answer the following questions about the scenario you just read. Please click the answer that BEST represents your opinion.

On a scale of 1-7 where 1 equals "Not at All" and 7 equals "Completely," please indicate which response BEST represents your opinion for the following questions.

How much do you think Kathy should blame herself for what happened?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at All						Completely

How much do you think Jason should blame himself for what happened?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at All						Completely

How much control do you think Kathy had over the situation?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at All						Completely

How much control do you think Jason had over the situation?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at All						Completely

How much do you agree Kathy should not have invited Jason over if she did not want to have sex with him?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at All						Completely

How much sympathy do you feel for Kathy?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at All						Completely

How much sympathy do you feel for Jason?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at All						Completely

Do you think this incident could have been avoided?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at All						Completely

Do you think it is Kathy's fault things turned out the way they did?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at All						Completely

Do you think it is Jason's fault things turned out the way they did?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at All						Completely

Do you agree that Jason should not have expected Kathy to have sex with him?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at All						Completely

How much did Kathy enjoy this situation?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at All						Completely

How obligated was Kathy to engage in sexual relations in this case?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at All						Completely

How interested was Kathy in having sexual relations?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at All						Completely

Victim and Perpetrator Blame Questionnaire (Form B)

Please answer the following questions about the scenario you just read. Please click the answer that BEST

represents your opinion.

On a scale of 1-7 where 1 equals "Not at All" and 7 equals "Completely," please indicate which response

BEST represents your opinion for the following questions.

How much do you think Jason should blame himself for what happened?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at All						Completely

How much do you think Kathy should blame herself for what happened?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at All						Completely

How much control do you think Jason had over the situation?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at All						Completely

How much control do you think Kathy had over the situation?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at All						Completely

How much do you agree Kathy should not have invited Jason over if she did not want to have sex with him?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at All						Completely

How much sympathy do you feel for Jason?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at All						Completely

How much sympathy do you feel for Kathy?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at All						Completely

Do you think this incident could have been avoided?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at All						Completely

Do you think it is Jason's fault things turned out the way they did?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at All						Completely

Do you think it is Kathy's fault things turned out the way they did?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at All						Completely

How much did Kathy enjoy this situation?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at All						Completely

Do you agree that Jason should not have expected Kathy to have sex with him?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at All						Completely

How obligated was Kathy to engage in sexual relations in this case?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at All						Completely

How interested was Kathy in having sexual relations?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at All						Completely

Appendix 5

Information Letter

You are invited to participate in a research study to investigate sexual assault blame ratings. The study is being conducted by Lisa S. Lively, M.A., under the direction of Dr. Randolph Pipes, in the Auburn University Department of Special Education, Rehabilitation, Counseling/School Psychology. You were selected as a possible participant because you are age 19 or older. This document has been approved by the Auburn University Institutional Review Board for use from April 13, 2011 to April 12, 2012. Protocol #11-117 MR 1104.

What will be involved if you participate? If you chose to participate in this study, you will be asked to fill out the Demographic Information Sheet and engage in a word completion task. Based on random assignment, other individuals will also read a word list and a sexual assault scenario and answer questions regarding perpetrator and victim blame. Your total time commitment will be approximately 20 minutes.

Are there any risks or discomforts? There is no expected risk to participants in this study. There is the possibility of some slight emotional discomfort related to the sexually explicit nature of some of the words in this study and the sexual assault scenario. You may discontinue participation at any time. If you do experience emotional discomfort, please contact a mental health provider in your area. 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.

Are there any benefits to yourself or others? You will not receive any direct benefits for participation.

Will you receive compensation for participating? You will not receive any form of compensation. However, for each participant one dollar will be donated to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center by the researcher (up to a maximum of $300). Your participation is completely voluntary. If you change your mind about participating**,** you can withdraw at any time during the study by exiting the study.

Your privacy will be protected**.** Information obtained from this study will remain anonymous and the data you provide will be stored in a password protected format by the researcher. Information obtained through your participation may be published in a professional journal and/or presented at a professional conference, but such information will not be directly connected with you.

If you have questions about this study**,** please contact Lisa S. Lively at livells@auburn.edu or Dr. Randolph Pipes at pipesrb@auburn.edu.

HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED, YOU MUST DECIDE IF YOU WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT. IF YOU DECIDE TO PARTICIPATE, YOUR CONTINUATION AND THE DATA YOU PROVIDE WILL SERVE AS YOUR AGREEMENT TO DO SO. IF YOU DO NOT WANT TO PARTICIPATE, YOU MAY EXIT THIS WEBSITE.

Appendix 6

Debriefing Statement

For the Study entitled:

"THE EFFECTS OF SEXIST LANGUAGE ON ATTRIBUTION OF BLAME FOLLOWING SEXUAL ASSAULT"

Dear Participant;

During this study, you were asked to fill out the Demographic Information Sheet and read some descriptive words. Additionally, you were asked to read a sexual assault scenario and answer questions regarding perpetrator and victim blame. You were told that the purpose of the study was to investigate the relationship between language and sexual assault blame ratings. Specifically, we are looking to see if exposure to sexist language has an effect on sexual assault blame ratings.

We emphasize that any violence against individuals (in this case women) is to be deplored at all times. Additionally, the use of sexist language should also be avoided and in this case was used by the researchers to better understand how such exposure to such language might influence individuals' behavior.

You are reminded that your original consent document included the following information: "If you change your mind about participating, you can withdraw at any time during the study." If you have any concerns about your participation or the data you provided in light of this disclosure, please discuss this with us. We will be happy to provide any information we can to help answer questions you have about this study.

If you have questions about your participation in the study, please contact me at livells@auburn.edu or my faculty advisor, Dr. Randolph Pipes at pipesrb@auburn.edu.

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

If you have experienced distress as a result of your participation in this study, please contact a mental healthcare provider in your area. (Please remember that any cost in seeking medical assistance is at your own expense.)

Please again accept our appreciation for your participation in this study.

Lisa S. Lively, M.A.   July 12, 2011