

Grappling with the Relationship between Men's Endorsement of Positive Stereotypes of Women  
and Support for Women's Rights

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## **STRUCTURED ABSTRACT**

### **Purpose**

This study examines the relationship between endorsement of positive stereotypes of women and support for women's rights to shed light on the role that endorsement of positive stereotypes may play in maintaining social stratification.

### **Design/methodology/approach**

The study uses data collected from a web-based survey of 181 male undergraduate students in six different universities and colleges to examine the relationship between the endorsement of positive stereotypes of women and support for women's rights. The paper examines four OLS regression models to determine the relationship and utilizes the statistical software Stata 9.2.

### **Findings**

Rather than a simple direct relationship, the findings suggest that the relationship between the endorsement of positive stereotypes and support for women's rights varies based on the level of hostile sexism. Increased endorsement of positive stereotypes of women was associated with decreased support for women's rights among males with the lowest level of hostile sexism, but the opposite relationship was found for males at the mean and the highest level of hostile sexism.

### **Research limitations/implications**

The findings suggest that endorsement of positive stereotypes plays a unique role for males who do not endorse traditional sexist attitudes. Although data are not available to clarify what processes might be undergirding the relationship, the author suggests directions for future research.

**Practical implications**

Given the relationship found, prejudice reduction interventions that rely on the promotion of positive stereotypes of various social groups should be closely examined to determine if they actually foster attitudes that are detrimental for the eradication of social stratification.

**Originality/value**

This study is one of the first to examine the possible negative impacts of endorsement of positive stereotypes of women on gender stratification through a moderated relationship with levels of hostile sexism.

Key words: sexism, positive stereotypes, modern prejudice, women's rights

Paper classification: Research paper

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### INTRODUCTION

Research on prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination has historically focused on attitudes and behaviors with a negative valence, that is, some type of aversion – emotional, cognitive, or both – toward members of the target social group. In fact, the very definition of prejudice in the academic literature in the past has centered on this notion of hostile or antipathetic attitudes (see for example, Allport, 1954; Tajfel, 1981). More recently, however, scholars have started to challenge the notion of this limited conceptualization, arguing for more complex and multidimensional understandings of attitudes toward historically marginalized groups (Fisk, 1998; Fiske et al., 1999; Morrison and Morrison, 2002; Walls, in press(a)). This has given rise to a body of scholarship that explores the endorsement and consequences of what is frequently referred to as *modern prejudice*.

Modern prejudice research has examined contemporary attitudes toward various social groups including people of color (Czopp, 2008; Czopp and Monteith, 2006; Gaertner and Dovidio, 1986; Ho and Jackson, 2001; Katz and Hass, 1988; McConahay and Hough, 1976), women (Glick and Fiske, 1996; Swim et al., 1995; Tougas et al., 1995), and lesbians and gay men (Morrison and Morrison, 2002; Walls, in press(a)), and has done so under the rubric of numerous different labels including aversive racism, subtle racism, modern racism, benevolent sexism, neo-sexism, modern homonegativity, and modern heterosexism. The existing findings suggest that not only is modern prejudice a cluster of attitudes that can be differentiated from old-fashioned prejudice (Morrison and Morrison, 2002; Swim et al., 1995, 2001; Walls, in press(a)), but that there are various subdomains which, at times, function differently within the

modern prejudice attitudinal family (Glick and Fiske, 1996; Walls, in press(a)). For example in their examination of attitudes toward women, Glick and Fiske (1996) theorize that benevolent sexism is comprised of the three subdomains of *paternalism*, *heterosexual intimacy*, and *gender differentiation*. Similarly, Walls (in press(a)) argues that modern heterosexism has at least four subdomains which he labels *aversive heterosexism*, *amnesic heterosexism*, *paternalistic heterosexism*, and *positive stereotypic heterosexism*.

This paper examines the relationship between subdomains of modern sexism and support for women's rights, with a primary focus on the functioning of the endorsement of positive stereotypes as one of those domains. The literature review examines the emergence of modern prejudice as a social phenomenon of interest to scholars, followed by a review of the existing empirical findings on the endorsement and functioning of positive stereotypes.

#### MODERN PREJUDICE THEORY

In the U.S. there has been increasing normative pressure over the last few decades on individuals not to appear prejudiced against social groups that have historically been disenfranchised (Crocker et al., 1998; Fiske, 1998; McConahay, 1986; Smith, 1985). There is also clear evidence that the overt expression of prejudice has decreased in this same time period (Bolzendahl and Myers, 2004; Farley, 1997; Loo and Thorpe, 1998; McConahay 1986). However, there is considerable debate in the literature over what this measured reduction actually means.

On the side of the debate that claims that levels of prejudice are lower now than in the past, there is extensive empirical evidence that attitudes about race (Carmines and Champagne, 1990; Farley, 1997; Jones, 1999; Warchal, 1999), gender (Bachrach et al., 2000; Badgett et al., 2000; Diekman and Eagly, 2000; Knodel et al., 1999; Morgan, 1998), and sexual orientation

(Beckham-Chasnoff, 1997; Chevannes, 1993; Herdt, 2001; Lynxwiler and Gay, 2000; Price and Hsu, 1992; Scott, 1998) are changing toward this less-prejudiced direction. In fact, some researchers argue that many individuals have internalized anti-prejudiced norms and monitor their behavior so as to act in accordance with these values (Devine et al., 1991; Gaertner and Dovidio, 1986; Katz and Hass, 1988).

The other side of the debate holds that as social change de-legitimizes previously acceptable overt manifestations of prejudicial attitudes and behaviors, new forms have evolved (Alder and Polk, 1982; Benokraitis and Feagin, 1995; Essed, 1991; Gaertner and Dovidio, 1986; Hecht and Baldwin, 1998; Moya and Exposito, 2001). The decrease in prejudicial levels that is found in the empirical literature, it is suggested, is the result of the continued use of traditional social science measures of sexism and racism that fail to capture these new emergent forms. While the new forms may appear to be less hostile, modern prejudice researchers argue that they maintain firm boundaries between social groups and perform similar psychological and sociopolitical functions as the previous manifestations of overt and hostilely prejudiced attitudes and behavior.

Modern prejudice researchers studying these contemporary prejudicial attitudes point to the strong evidence that, for example, behaviors toward women and current structural inequalities are inconsistent with the more liberal attitudes toward women and women's roles that are reported (Benokraitis and Feagin, 1995; Rowe, 1990). For example, there still exists a strong preference for a male supervisor over a female supervisor in the workplace (Gallup, 1990). Gendered segregation in the workplace (Glenn and Feldberg, 1984; Jacobs, 1992; O'Steen, 1993) and differential salary levels still exist for women (Stroh et al., 1993; Whitaker, 1990). Men are preferred over women for male-typed employment (Davison and Burke, 2000)

and women who enter non-traditional fields often face hostile reactions including sexual harassment from their male colleagues (Collinson et al., 1990; Fitzgerald et al., 1997; Morrison and van Glinow, 1990). In the home, females disproportionately bear the responsibility for childcare and housework (Biernat and Wortman, 1991); are disproportionately victims of domestic violence and rape (Benokraitis and Feagin, 1995) and childhood sexual abuse (Bagley and Ramsay, 1985-1986; Fromuth, 1986). Overall, women experience more incidences of gender-related discrimination than do men (Kobryniewicz and Branscombe, 1997; Swim et al., 2001).

Likewise, there is dissonance between behaviors toward people of color and continued structural inequalities. African Americans are more likely to live in areas with environmental hazards than are whites (Adeola, 1994; Boer et al., 1997; Stretesky, 2003) and significant black-white income disparities continue to exist (Duncan, 1994; Loury, 2000). Within the criminal justice system, police are more likely to stop (Bricker, 2003), and arrest (Chiricos and Crawford, 1995; Cooney, 1992) African American males than white males, and the courts are more likely to convict (Beaulieu and Messner, 1999; Chiricos and Crawford, 1995; Crawford et al., 1998) and give the death penalty when the victim is white (Keil and Vito, 1995; Radelet and Vandiver, 1986). Similarly, there are disparities between whites and Latino/as in health care service delivery (Aiken and Sloan, 2001; Lasser et al., 2002), underemployment (Jensen et al., 2000), homeownership (Flippen, 2001) and economic segregation (Jargowsky, 1996).

Through an examination of years of research about the specific content of stereotypes for various social groups, Fiske and colleagues (Fiske et al., 2002; and prior versions of the model, Fiske, 1998; Glick and Fiske, 1999) developed a two-by-two model of stereotype content which demonstrates the co-existence of negative and positive affect, attitudes, and behaviors toward

many historically marginalized social groups. Consequent research on their stereotype content model has provided additional support to this conceptualization (Claussell and Fiske, 2005; Eckes, 2002).

From an intergroup relations perspective, Jackman (1994) has also made persuasive arguments that subjectively positive feelings play a critical role in maintaining stratification in group relations marked by long-term social inequality. Decoupling hostility from discrimination enabled her to delineate the role of intimacy, persuasion, and paternalism in the continuation of privileged and subordinated group statuses. The specific form in which this paternalistic ideology manifests itself, she suggests, varies depending upon the history of, and the structural relationship between the two groups.

This more complex conceptualization of prejudicial attitudes not only provides an explanation for the discrepancy between attitudes and behaviors found in some research on prejudice and discrimination, but also provides a framework for understanding the disparity between documented improved attitudes toward traditionally disenfranchised social groups and on-going structural inequalities. The modern prejudice theoretical conceptualization challenges us to examine not only negatively-valenced attitudes, but also those that are subjectively positive.

## POSITIVE STEREOTYPES

### *Endorsement of Positive Stereotypes*

The attribution of positive traits to traditionally marginalized groups is not new. Katz and Braly (1933) demonstrated that whites often ascribed positive traits such as intellectual ability to Asians (see also, Karlins et al., 1969), and positive stereotypical beliefs about African Americans have been a common theme in the Princeton Trilogy studies (Gilbert, 1951; Karlins et al., 1969;



Katz and Braly, 1933). Likewise in more recent scholarship the endorsement of positive stereotypes has been examined about women (Eagly and Mladinic, 1994; Langford and MacKinnon, 2000; Williams and Best, 1990), about Asians (Ho and Jackson, 2001; Jackson et al., 1996; Jackson et al., 1997; Madon et al., 2001), African Americans (Connor, 1995; Cose, 2002; Devine and Elliott, 1995; Gaertner and Dovidio, 1986; Madon et al., 2001), and about lesbians and gay men (Morrison and Bearden, 2007; Walls, in press(b)).

The examination of issues surrounding positive stereotypes has included looking at the endorsement of positive stereotypes and stereotypical traits both on the part of individuals who belong to the group being stereotyped (ingroup), as well as on the part of individuals who do not belong to the group being stereotyped (outgroup). While there are differences in the perceptions of ingroup and outgroup members with regards to these stereotypes, there does appear to be agreement between members of both groups indicating that the endorsement and expression of positive stereotypes about historically marginalized groups is a common occurrence (Czopp, 2008).

#### *Positive Stereotypes and Outgroup Members*

Among outgroup members, positive stereotypes are not necessarily seen as problematic or even as a form of prejudice (Czopp, 2008; Lambert et al., 1997; Mae and Carlston, 2005). This appears to be true even among individuals who do not express traditional, hostile prejudice toward the social group. Devine and Elliott (1995) found that low-prejudiced individuals believed that positive stereotypes of African Americans were accurate depictions as much as did high-prejudiced individuals. Even more problematic, not only did white participants in one study rate expressions of positive stereotypes of African Americans significantly more favorably than did African American participants, but they also viewed the endorsement of such stereotypes as

being *helpful* in improving race relations between whites and African Americans, a perception not shared by their African American counterparts (Czopp, 2008).

A few studies have examined interventions that have purposefully sought to increase the endorsement of positive stereotypes about a specific group as a strategy to improve attitudes toward the group among outgroup members (see for example, Puhl et al., 2005). Exposure to positive stereotypical information about African Americans has, not surprisingly, been linked to increased endorsement of positive stereotypes of African Americans, but not necessarily with more overall positive racial attitudes (Tan et al., 2001). This suggests that replacing negative stereotypes about a social group with positive stereotypes about that group may not be a particularly effective way in which to challenge social inequity.

The endorsement of positive stereotypes of Asians as being highly competent was found to be related to a decreased willingness to share a dorm room with Asian American students among whites (Lin et al., 2005), and because people are less likely to view positive stereotypes as problematic, they are concomitantly less likely to correct for the impact of the positive stereotypes on social judgments (Lambert et al., 1997). Czopp (2004) has suggested that whites may view the flattering tone of positive stereotypes of African Americans as a form of a “moral credential” (Monin and Miller, 2001), which then, they believe, serves to neutralize negative racist attitudes they also hold: “How could I be racist if I just stated something so positive about African Americans?”

In line with some components of the ideas about aversive racism (Gaertner and Dovidio, 1986), whites who were given an opportunity to praise African Americans for skills and talents reflecting positive stereotypes about African Americans, were more likely in a subsequent evaluation to denigrate African Americans than were whites who were denied the opportunity to

offer praise (Czopp, 2004). Positive stereotypes may also have cross-race implications as well. Making the model minority stereotypes about Asian Americans salient appears to result in an increased endorsement among whites of the belief that personal shortcomings of African Americans were the cause of social problems facing that community (Ho, 1998). Blatant activation of positive stereotypes about another social group has even resulted in improved performance on tasks related to the stereotypes for outgroup members by increasing the salience of the task – a phenomena known as stereotype assimilative behavior (Bargh et al., 1996; Dijksterhuis et al., 1998; Dijksterhuis and van Knippenberg, 1998; Wheeler et al., 2001).

#### *Positive Stereotypes and Ingroup Members*

Turning our attention to the endorsement of positive stereotypes and members of the group being stereotyped also finds a number of interesting findings. Czopp (2008) examined the differences in evaluations of job applicants who expressed positive stereotypes about groups to which they don't belong by members of the group being stereotyped. He found that those applicants who expressed positive stereotypes were viewed as significantly less likable, as more biased, and as significantly less qualified for the employment position than applicants who expressed neither positive nor negative stereotypes. This suggests that ingroup and outgroup members have very different perceptions of the meaning of the expression of positive stereotypes by outgroup members.

Other studies have used exposure to positive stereotypes as a way to improve functioning of members who belong to the group being stereotyped (Hausdorff et al., 1999; Levy, 2000; Levy et al., 1999-2000; Shih et al., 1999). This has particularly been true in research on older adults and on the “model minority” stereotypes regarding Asians. Positive stereotype activation has been demonstrated to improve performance on math tests among Asians (Shih et al., 1999;

Shih et al., 2002); handwriting (Levy, 2000), gait (Hausdorff et al., 1999), and memory (Levy, 1996) among older adults; and performance on age appropriate manipulation tasks among children (Ambady et al., 2001). The existing research does suggest, however, that while subliminal or subtle positive stereotype activation may be beneficial for group members who belong to the group being stereotyped (Ambady et al., 2001; Levy, 2000; Shih et al. 2002), more blatant activation of the positive stereotype may actually lead to decreased performance for group members (Cheryan and Bodenhausen 2000; Shih et al., 2002) by increasing test anxiety, depressed mood, and psychological distress (Chng et al., 1998; Crystal et al., 1994). In addition to the different effects related to the subtlety of the activation of the stereotype, there is some question as to the importance of self-relevance of the positive stereotype (see Levy, 1996 and Dijksterhuis and van Knippenberg, 1998 for contradictory findings).

Individual group members who are being positively stereotyped by outgroup members may resent having to correct outgroup members' perceptions of them when the characteristics – even though positive – are inaccurate (Branscombe et al., 1999; Czopp, 2008). Target group members may also hold general expectations that outgroup members' behaviors and attitudes will be shaped by prejudice (Johnson and Lecci, 2003), and may, therefore, be more attuned to interpersonal cues related to prejudice (Flournoy et al., 2002).

Overall, the evidence in the literature on positive stereotypes suggests a number of trends. First, the endorsement of positive stereotypes about various social groups seems to be fairly common both among ingroup and outgroup members. Second, positive stereotypes appear to be commonly endorsed both by those who score high as well as those who score low on traditional measures of old-fashioned prejudice toward the group being stereotyped. Third, even though endorsement seems to be fairly common, the meaning assigned to the endorsement of positive

stereotypes seems to be quite different for ingroup and outgroup members. Fourth, while promotion of the endorsement of positive stereotypes as a form of prejudice reduction may result in the increased endorsement of those types of stereotypes about the group, it seems questionable whether this intervention changes more global prejudicial attitudes about the group. Fifth, there does appear to be some positive effect of activating positive stereotypes on performance of ingroup members as long as the activation is either subliminal or subtle. Finally, the endorsement of positive stereotypes appears to have a complicated relationship with social stratification, rather than a straightforward direct relationship like more traditional forms of prejudice.

#### *The Measurement of Positive Stereotypes*

As the conceptualization of prejudice has broadened to include both negatively- and positively-valenced attitudes and beliefs, new measurement instruments have been developed. While many of the new instruments that have emerged from modern prejudice scholars have recognized the new rhetoric employed to legitimize unequal social relations between groups, few of these instruments have explicitly incorporated the domain of positive stereotypes (see, for example, Morrison and Morrison's (2002) Modern Homonegativity Scale).

While Glick and Fiske's (1996) conceptualization of benevolent sexism did not explicitly include a subdomain of the endorsement of positive stereotypes of women, their Ambivalent Sexism Inventory does include a subdomain of benevolent sexism that they label as *gender differentiation*. An examination of the questions formulated to capture this cluster of attitudes finds that each question indicates the positive evaluation of women as compared to men, not just differentiation between the sexes. One question, for example, asks, "Women, as compared to men, tend to have a more refined sense of culture and good taste."<sup>1</sup> What Glick and Fiske label

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<sup>1</sup> The remaining two questions for the gender differentiation subcomponent are "Women, compared to men, tend to have a superior moral sensibility" and "Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess."

as *gender differentiation* actually taps into endorsement of positive stereotypes of women which, granted, may very well perform the function of differentiating genders in a traditional, essentialist model of gender.

Four other instruments that have more explicitly sought to capture the endorsement of positive stereotypes than the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory include the Attitudes Toward Asians scale (Ho and Jackson, 2001), the Complementary Stereotypes and Negative Prejudice scale (which examines attitudes toward African Americans, Czopp and Monteith, 2006), the Homopositivity Scale (Morrison and Bearden, 2007) and the Multidimensional Heterosexism Inventory (Walls, in press(a), in press(b)).

### *Hypothesis*

This paper's primary focus is on the examination of how the endorsement of positive stereotypes of women as one particular subdomain of modern sexism might be related to support for women's rights. However, the existing research relating the endorsement of positive stereotypes to social stratification has examined the relationship primarily in the context of outgroup members. Glick and Fiske (2001) found that benevolent sexism works in conjunction with hostile sexism, but only for men. The work of Monin and Miller (2001) and Czopp (2004) have focused on the use of moral credentials in racial bias among white subjects, as did the work of Lin and colleagues (2005) regarding attitudes toward Asians and social distance. Combining these results with the evidence that the endorsement of positive stereotypes means something different for ingroup and outgroup members, this study follows a similar pattern and examines the relationship between positive stereotypes and support for women's rights, but only for outgroup members, in this case, men.

The literature also suggests a number of possible relationships. If the relationship follows the pattern identified in Lin et al.'s (2005) work, we would expect to find that increased endorsement of positive stereotypes of women would be related to decreased support for women's rights. It is also possible that positive relationships are truly positive, in which case we might expect to find that increased endorsement of positive stereotypes of women are associated with increased support for women's rights. Or, the final possibility is that the relationship is more complex, particularly given the findings that hostile forms of prejudice work in tandem with modern forms of prejudice to maintain stratification (Czopp, 2008; Glick and Fiske, 2001). This suggests that an interaction effect might exist whereby the endorsement of positive stereotypes functions differently based on the level of hostile forms of sexism.

#### METHODOLOGY

This study was administered via a web-based survey at six universities in the Midwest, Southeast and Southwest regions of the United States. Five were private universities, consisting of two Catholic-affiliated schools, one Mennonite-affiliated college, one Baptist-affiliated university, and one university not affiliated with a religious denomination. The sixth school was a medium-sized public university in the Midwest.<sup>2</sup> The total sample consists of 651 undergraduates taking introductory social science, however of those, 606 provided answers to all questions of interest to the study. Of the 606 respondents, 70.13% were female and 29.87% were male. Because Glick and Fiske (2001) found that benevolent sexism function in conjunction with hostile sexism to predict attitudes toward women only for their male respondents, this study similarly will examine the functioning of the endorsement of positive stereotypes among the male respondents ( $n=181$ ). All statistics from this point further, refer only to the male sample.

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<sup>2</sup> Approximately 42% of the sample was from the public university, 19% from a Catholic university, 12% from a Catholic women's college, 11% from the private secular university, and 8% each from the Mennonite and Baptist schools.

### *Procedure*

Participants were given course credit for completion of the survey for the social science course in which they were enrolled. In addition to demographics, and the variables reported here, respondents completed numerous other social psychological scales and questions. The survey items were divided into six different modules which were presented in two varying sequences to check for order effects. Once a module was completed, the respondent could not return to that particular module.

### *Independent Variables*

Gender, race/ethnicity, age, and family size were all collected using standard survey questions. To capture family income, respondents were given a series of categories (*under \$5,000, \$5,000 to \$14,999, \$15,000 to \$24,999, etc.*) in which to classify their family's income. Respondents were asked to place themselves on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from *Strongly liberal* to *Strongly conservative* to measure political orientation.

Religious tradition was derived from three separate questions. Respondents were first asked, "What religion do you consider yourself?" The response set included options for *Buddhist, Hindu, Christian, Muslim, Jewish, No religious belief/agnostic/atheist, and other*. Respondents who chose *other* were asked to name their religion. Next, respondents who were Christian were asked to further classify themselves into one of five Christian traditions: *Catholic, Conservative non-traditional (Jehovah's Witness, Mormon, Christian Science, etc.), Evangelical Protestant (Baptist, AME, Church of God in Christ, Pentecostal, Assembly of God, etc.), Liberal non-traditional (Unitarian, Unity, Humanistic, Spiritualists, New Age, etc.), Mainline Protestant (Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopal, United Churches of Christ, Disciples of Christ, etc.), and Non-denominational*. Finally, as an additional check on religious tradition all respondents were



asked to name the specific church they attend, if they do attend: “What is the actual name of the church you attend or consider yourself to be a part of (this information is for denominational classification purposes only)?” Base on responses to these three questions, the respondent was classified into religious tradition categories of Catholic, Liberal/Mainline Protestant, Conservative Protestant, Other Christian, Other non-Christian, and secular.

Religiosity was captured using three measures that are frequently used in the sociological literature. Respondents were asked, “Do you go to religious services...more than once a week, once a week, almost every week, once or twice a month, a few times a year or never?” and were given the corresponding response set. Next, they responded to the question, “Outside of attending religious services, do you pray...several times a day, once a day, a few times a week, once a week or less, or never?” Finally, they were asked, “Would you say your religion provides little or no guidance, quite a bit of guidance, or a great deal of guidance in your day-to-day life?” All religiosity questions were recoded so that higher values represent greater religiosity.

Both hostile and benevolent forms of sexism are captured using Glick and Fiske’s (1996, 1997; Fiske and Glick, 1995) Ambivalent Sexism Inventory. The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory is a 22-question self-report inventory that captures both subdomains on a Likert scale measuring agreement/disagreement with the statements. Hostile sexism consists of three subcomponents: dominative paternalism, competitive gender differentiation, and heterosexual hostility. Dominative paternalism is a concept that captures attitudes where women are perceived to not be fully competent adults. Competitive gender differentiation captures the cluster of attitudes that justify male dominance by associating the traits that are deemed necessary for governing social institutions as male-only qualities. The final subcomponent of hostile sexism is heterosexual hostility which encompasses attitudes whereby sexual attraction and dominance are intertwined:

it is the belief that women use their sexual allure to gain dominance over men. (For more on the specific subcomponents and the theoretical justification for inclusion as subcomponents of both hostile and benevolent sexism, see Glick and Fiske (1996)). The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory has demonstrated good reliability coefficients across six different samples used in initial testing of the psychometrics of the scale, ranging from .83 to .92. The hostile sexism subscale also performed well with reliabilities from .80 to .92 in these same samples.

Benevolent sexism, similarly, consists of three subcomponents: protective paternalism, complementary gender differentiation, and heterosexual intimacy. The protective paternalism subdomain captures attitudes whereby women are seen to have the need for a protector and frequently these attitudes are couched in terms of love. Complementary gender differentiation are beliefs that men and women are different and the characteristics assigned to women are frequently those of positive stereotypes. Finally, heterosexual intimacy is the desire for psychological closeness and is often accompanied by beliefs that an intimate heterosexual relationship is necessary for a complete life. The benevolent sexism subscale has demonstrated reliabilities from .73 to .85 in the above-mentioned studies exploring the psychometrics of the scale. As this study has a specific interest in the endorsement of positive stereotypes, the benevolent sexism subdomain was decomposed into its three subcomponents as the complementary gender differentiation subcomponent arguably captures endorsement of positive stereotypes of women.

Since its introduction in social psychology, the ASI has been used extensively in psychology and social psychology (see for example, Glick et al., 1997; Masser and Abrams 1999; Mladnic et al., 1998; Russell and Trigg, 2004) and has been shown to have good

psychometric qualities in its Spanish (Expósito et al., 1998; Mladnic et al., 1998) and German (Eckes and Six-Materna, 1999) language versions as well.

### *Dependent Variable*

Four questions were utilized to capture the domain of support for or opposition to women's civil rights. All of the questions had a seven-point Likert scale response set allowing respondents to indicate levels of agreement/disagreement from *Strongly Agree* to *Strongly Disagree*. The questions were: a) "Women should receive equal pay to men for doing the same work", b) "The U.S. should ratify the Equal Rights Amendment to insure that women are not discriminated against", c) "Gender should be included in hate crime laws", and d) "Guaranteeing that the same job will be available to a woman who goes on maternity leave places an unfair burden on the employer". All questions were recoded so that higher scores represent greater support for women's rights. Responses were summed and divided by 28 resulting in a dependent variable with a range from 0 to 1 where 0 represents complete disagreement with support for women's rights and a 1 represents complete agreement with support for women's rights.

## FINDINGS

### *Descriptive Statistics*

Caucasians made up the majority of the sample (79.6%), followed by Hispanics (8.3%), African Americans (4.4%), Asian/Asian Americans (3.9%), biracial individuals (3.3%), and less than 1% of individuals who identified as other races. The majority of respondents were first year students (55.3%), 27.6% were sophomores, 13.8% were juniors and the remaining 3.3% were seniors.

Ages ranged from 18 to 56, with a mean of 20.5 years and a standard deviation of 4.7 years. Slightly more than 65% of the students identified as middle class, 19% as working class,

14% as upper class and 2% as lower class. Income was reported in categories, with 9.4% reporting family incomes of less than \$25,000, 18.2% with incomes between \$25,000 and \$54,000, 17.2% between \$55,000 and \$74,000, 29.3% between \$75,000 and \$104,000, and the remaining 25.4% report family incomes of \$105,000 or greater.

With regard to religion, 35.6% of the sample reported religious affiliations as Catholic, 33.3% with churches in denominations classified as conservative Protestant, 17.2% reported no religious affiliation, 10.6% as mainline or liberal Protestant, and the remaining 3.3% as other non-Christian religious affiliation. Almost 35% of the respondents consider themselves liberal, 18% moderate, and the remaining 47% conservative.<sup>3</sup>

### *Inferential Statistics*

Four OLS regression models were used to examine the relationships between the independent variables and support for women's rights. In the first model demographic variables of race, age, family size, and income were included to establish a baseline model. In the second model, political orientation and religion-related variables were added to the baseline model. In the third model, hostile sexism and the three subdomains of benevolent sexism were added to the baseline model. In the final model, all variables that were significant in either models two or three were maintained and the interactions of all subdomains of sexism that were significant were examined. Table 1 contains the results from each of the four tested regression models.

### *Model 1: Baseline*

In the baseline model, we find that Asian males were significantly less likely to support women's rights than were white males. The coefficient of -.20 suggests that, on average, Asian males in the sample were .20 points (20% of the 0 to 1 scale) lower in their support than were

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<sup>3</sup> Liberal category includes those who considered themselves as strongly liberal, liberal, or slightly liberal. Likewise, the conservative category includes those who consider themselves as strongly conservative, conservative, or slightly conservative.

white males. However given the small size of the Asian male subsample, this result should be viewed very cautiously. No other racial differences or differences based on age, family size, or income emerged as significant. The baseline model explains 9.74% of the variability in support for women's rights.

### *Model 2: Politics and Religion*

In model 2, political orientation, religious tradition, and three variables capturing various forms of religiosity are added to the baseline model. The racial difference that existed in the baseline model between Asian men and white men is no longer significant indicating that either political orientation or some aspect of religion was the underlying difference in the original significance found in the baseline model. Political orientation is a significant correlate with a -.02 coefficient suggesting that for every 1 point increase on the political orientation scale (toward *strongly conservative*), we find a .02 decrease in support for women's rights. This suggests that, on average, the males who identify as *strongly liberal* would score .12 points higher in support for women's rights than males who identify as *strongly conservative*. This represents 12% of the full scale.

No differences emerge in terms of religious tradition (using *conservative Protestant* as the reference group), nor do differences emerge in terms of church attendance or how much the respondent reports that religion guides their everyday life. Frequency of prayer, however, is statistically significant with a coefficient of -.03. This suggests that males who report that they *never* pray are .12 points less supportive of women's rights than males who report that they *pray several times a day*. Controlling for religious tradition, frequency of church attendance, and the level of guidance religion plays, increased levels of praying are associated with increased support

for women's rights. The model that includes political orientation and religion-related variables explains 18.4% of the variability in support for women's rights.

#### *Model 3: Domains of Sexism*

Hostile sexism and the three subdomains of benevolent sexism are added to the baseline model in model 3. Both hostile sexism and the endorsement of positive stereotypes of women are significant predictors of support for women's rights. Neither of the remaining two subdomains of benevolent sexism (heterosexual intimacy and paternalism) are significant predictors. Hostile sexism has a coefficient of approximately  $-.04$  suggesting that for every one point increase in hostile sexism, there is a concomitant drop of  $.04$  points in support for women's rights. Given that the hostile sexism scale is standardized to a 1 to 7 scale, we would anticipate that males with the lowest level of hostile sexism would, on average, be  $.24$  points more supportive of women's rights than males with the highest level of hostile sexism, representing almost a quarter of the scale's range.

The endorsement of positive stereotypes of women (as measured by the gender differentiation subdomain of benevolent sexism on the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory) has a coefficient of  $.03$ . This suggests that for every one point increase in endorsement of positive stereotypes of women, there is a  $.03$  increase in support for women's rights. So we would expect, on average, for the male who is lowest in endorsement of positive stereotypes of women to score  $.18$  points lower in support for women's rights than males who are the most endorsing of positive stereotypes of women.

#### *Model 4: Interaction Effects*

In the final model, I add all variables that were significantly significant from model 2 (political orientation and prayer) and model 3 (hostile sexism and endorsement of positive

stereotypes), and to test the hypothesis that the endorsement of positive stereotypes functions differently based on the level of hostile sexism, I add an interaction variable between the two subdomains of sexism.

Political orientation is no longer statistically significant suggesting that what had emerged in model 2 as differences based on the level of conservatism is actually a function of one of the subdomains of sexism or the interaction between the two subdomains. Frequency of prayer and hostile sexism maintain their statistical significance as in previous models. The endorsement of positive stereotypes variable is no longer statistically significant, however, the interaction term between hostile sexism and the endorsement of positive stereotypes emerges as significant. The model now explains 21.85% of the variability in support for women's rights.

I have graphed the interaction effect in Figure 1 to provide a visual representation of what the coefficients actually mean. On the y-axis is the level of support for women's rights. The higher up, the more supportive of women's rights with 1.0 representing 100% strongly supportive of the questions asked about women's rights on the survey. On the x-axis is the level of endorsement of positive stereotypes of women. Three data points have been graphed: no endorsement of positive stereotypes of women, the mean level of endorsement of positive stereotypes of women, and the highest level of endorsement of positive stereotypes of women. The three lines represent differing levels of hostile sexism. The line with the triangles represents the maximum level of hostile sexism, the line with the squares represents the mean level of hostile sexism, and the line with the diamonds represents the lowest level of hostile sexism.

## DISCUSSION

If the analyses of the data had stopped at model 3, it would have suggested that, among males, increased endorsement of positive stereotypes of women is associated with increased

support for women's rights. However, in model 4, by testing the interaction effect of the endorsement of positive stereotypes of women with hostile sexism, we find a much more complex relationship emerging.

Referring back to Figure 1, we find, rather, that the endorsement of positive stereotypes is associated with increased support for women's rights for men who are the most hostilely sexist and for men who are at a mean level of hostile sexism. While it is possible that for these men, increased endorsement of positive stereotypes of women tempers their opposition to support for women's rights (more so for men at the highest level of hostile sexism than for men at the mean level of hostile sexism), it seems more likely that this pattern actually represents the pattern Glick and Fiske (2001) found in their exploration of the complementary role of hostile and benevolent sexism. Hostilely sexist men who view women in general as gender-conforming in the traditional model of gender (more pure, more moral, more cultured, etc.), are more favorable to women's rights, while hostilely sexist men who view women in general as gender-nonconforming in the traditional model of gender are less favorable to women's rights. In essence, this pattern fits with Glick and Fiske's (2001) argument that hostilely sexist men punish women who do not conform to traditional gender roles (feminists, lesbians, career women, etc.) while they reward women who do conform to traditional gender roles (housewives, soccer moms, etc). The degree to which more traditionally sexist men see women in general as gender conforming (greater endorsement of positive stereotypes) influences their degree of support for women's rights.

But what of the very different pattern that emerges for men who demonstrate the lowest levels of hostile sexism – for men who would be considered non-sexist, at least in the traditional expression of sexism? For these men, increased endorsement of positive stereotypes of women is



associated with *decreased* support for women's rights. While the data do not allow us to determine what is undergirding this pattern, there are a number of interesting possibilities. In the next paragraph, I outline the possibility that I believe is the most theoretically grounded in the research on gender stratification and modern prejudice theory which deserves further investigation.

In years past when overt, old-fashioned sexism was not stigmatized, men could use the ideas inherent in negative stereotypes of women (overly emotional, dependent, irrational, less intelligent, etc.) in service to their male identity development as a way to differentiate themselves as men. However, as social change has increasingly stigmatized the endorsement of negative stereotypes of women, men who view themselves as non-sexist no longer have these negative stereotypes from which to draw on as a way to assist them in their gender identity development. However, because the endorsement of positive stereotypes are not seen as prejudicial attitudes to outgroup members (Czopp, 2008; Lambert et al., 1997; Mae and Carlston, 2005), men still have the option to turn to positive characteristics associated with women in the traditional model of gender as a reference point from which to consolidate their masculine gender identity. They have, in essence, shifted from defining their masculinity in opposition to irrationality and dependence to defining their masculinity in opposition to being more cultured and more moral. What is ironic about either of these processes of defining masculinity is that they are both in relation to the same traditional model of womanhood – one just focuses on the negative characteristics associated with the model while the other focuses on the positive characteristics associated with it. Regardless of whether men use the negative or positive characteristics of this model of gender identity, defining one's self as a masculine being using the model as the reference point reifies and reinforces the system of gender stratification built on the model. In

this way, “non-sexist” men reinforce the patriarchal system by endorsing positive stereotypes of women, while “sexist” men reinforce the same system by denigrating women using more traditionally hostile sexist ideology.

What does this potentially mean, then, with regard to decreasing prejudicial attitudes toward women among males? First, it raises significant concern about any approach to prejudice reduction that incorporates the reinforcement of positive stereotypes of women as part of its intervention. Such content, these results suggest, reifies a model of gender that supports and maintains gender stratification. For traditionally sexist men, while the pattern in the data suggests that those in this subgroup who are more endorsing of positive stereotypes are more supportive of women’s rights, it is unclear what this relationship actually means. One possibility that fits well with previous findings (Glick & Fiske, 2001) suggests that hostilely sexist men who endorse positive stereotypes of women are more supportive of women’s rights *because* they perceive women, in general, to be gender conforming. On the other hand, hostilely sexist men who do not endorse positive stereotypes of women are less supportive of women’s rights *because* they perceive women, in general, to be gender non-conforming. A second possible explanation is that endorsement of positive stereotypes actually tempers hostilely sexist men’s opposition to public policy that supports greater equality for women. Further research on subtypes of women (homemakers and sex objects vs. feminists) could shed light on which of these possibilities is, indeed, undergirding this pattern in the data. Regardless, however, of which possibility is in play, both interpretations suggest that for women to be deemed “deserving” of equal rights, they must conform to positive stereotypes of women – that is they must embody purity, morality, and being cultured. This role restriction is, of course, highly problematic, and antithetical to gender equality.

For men, however, who are not traditionally sexist, the reinforcement of positive stereotypes in prejudice reduction interventions has different implications. As with hostilely sexist men, different possibilities exist that might explain the pattern that emerged in the data. The subgroup of non-hostilely sexist men who did not see women as necessarily gender conforming was more supportive of women's rights than the subgroup of non-hostilely sexist men who saw women as gender conforming. This could suggest that among non-hostilely sexist men there is still a denigration of characteristics that have been considered traditionally female. It could, alternatively mean, that promoting positive stereotypes of women actually dampens support for women's rights among this group of men. Or it could imply, as I have suggested previously, that there is a subgroup of non-hostilely sexist men, who still embrace a traditional model of gender in service to their masculine gender identity development, but are "sensitive" enough to realize that endorsing traditionally negative characteristics of women is problematic. Again, further research is needed to determine the processes that underlie this pattern. Regardless, none of these possible explanations would suggest that promotion of positive stereotypes of women would be a particularly effective prejudice reduction intervention among these men.

If we look at the overall pattern of which subgroup of men were the most supportive of women's rights, we find that non-hostilely sexist men who did not endorse positive stereotypes of women were the most likely to support the pro-women public policies examined in this study. This, in and of itself, suggests that efficacious prejudice reduction interventions must challenge both negative attitudes and stereotypes, as well as positive stereotypes of women if the goal is greater support of public policies that seek to attenuate gender stratification. These findings suggest that to fail to challenge positive stereotypes in such interventions may end up reifying a

traditional model of gender that relies on the subjugation of women, even if the intervention chips away at hostile attitudes and negative stereotypes about women. As Jackman (1994) has so eloquently pointed out, long-term patterns of domination and subjugation are best maintained by “sweet persuasion.”

This study has not examined the impact of the endorsement of positive stereotypes of women on women themselves, or on individuals who identify as transgender or outside the hegemonic model of a binary gender. It seems possible that women’s endorsement of positive stereotypes of women may perform different functions as well. Effects on the psychological level of individual women may very well be positive and esteem-boosting, while the effects at the structural level could reinforce gender stratification. The effects may depend on the gender identity development phase of the individual, and are likely complicated by the impact of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, social class, and other cultural differences. Clearly much is unknown about the impact of positive stereotype endorsement and much still needs to be done to better understand the phenomenon.

## CONCLUSION

This study has examined the relationship between endorsement of positive stereotypes of women and support for women’s rights among a male sample. What emerged was a complex relationship that varies depending on the level of hostile sexism. Both the pattern that emerged for more traditionally sexist men as well as that which emerged for men who would be considered non-sexist potentially have a role to play in maintaining and reinforcing a gendered stratified system based on sexism and male privilege.

In line with previous research, the findings suggest that more traditionally sexist men play a role in maintaining gender stratification by rewarding gender conforming women and

punishing gender nonconforming women through their support of women's rights. These results are in line with Glick and Fiske's (2001) findings. The study, however, adds an additional layer suggesting that traditionally non-sexist men may play a unique role in supporting sexism through their endorsement of positive stereotypes of women.

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## FIGURE LEGENDS

Figure 1: Interaction Effect of the Endorsement of Positive Stereotypes of Women and Hostile Sexism on Support for Women's Rights.



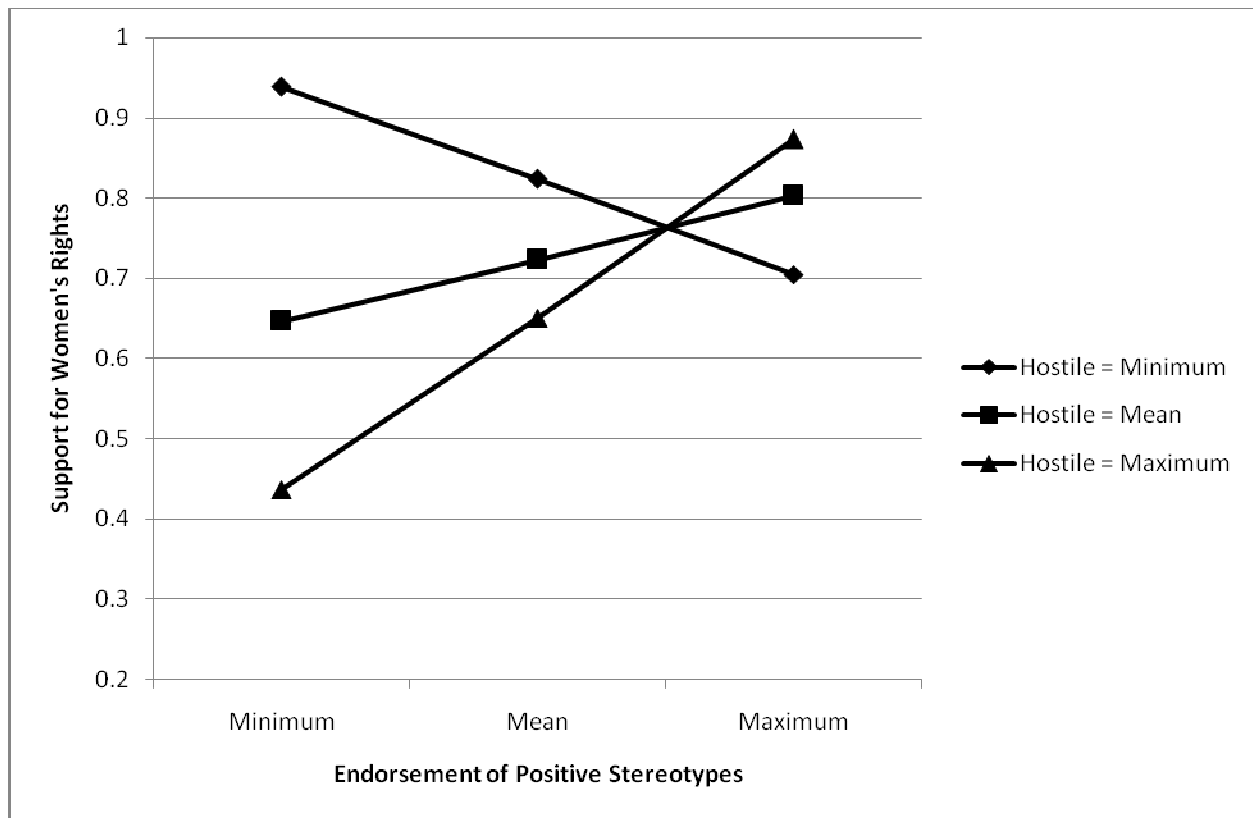


Table 1: Regression Models Predicting Support for Women's Rights

|  | <b>Model 1</b>      | <b>Model 2</b>    | <b>Model 3</b>    | <b>Model 4</b>     |
|--|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| <b>African American<sup>1</sup></b>                              | .017<br>(.0726)     | -.039<br>(.0744)  | .024<br>(.0701)   | -.027<br>(.0711)   |
| <b>Asian/Pacific Islander<sup>1</sup></b>                        | -.203***<br>(.0770) | -.149<br>(.0767)  | -.179*<br>(.0745) | -.157*<br>(.0735)  |
| <b>Latino/a<sup>1</sup></b>                                      | .044<br>(.0436)     | .038<br>(.0545)   | .044<br>(.0528)   | .030<br>(.0517)    |
| <b>Other Race/Ethnicity<sup>1</sup></b>                          | .079<br>(.0768)     | .064<br>(.0767)   | .091<br>(.0749)   | .059<br>(.0733)    |
| <b>Age</b>   | .003<br>(.0034)     | .003<br>(.0034)   | .003<br>(.0033)   | .003<br>(.0032)    |
| <b>Family size</b>   | -.013<br>(.0088)    | -.014<br>(.0087)  | -.014<br>(.0085)  | -.012<br>(.0084)   |
| <b>Income</b>  | -.008<br>(.0050)    | -.009<br>(.0051)  | -.006<br>(.0049)  | -.006<br>(.0049)   |
| <b>Political orientation</b>                                     |                     | -.022*<br>(.0090) |                   | -.015<br>(.0092)   |
| <b>Catholic<sup>2</sup></b>                                      |                     | .034<br>(.0367)   |                   |                    |
| <b>Liberal/mainline Protestant<sup>2</sup></b>                   |                     | .072<br>(.0530)   |                   |                    |
| <b>Non-Christian faith tradition<sup>2</sup></b>                 |                     | -.081<br>(.0876)  |                   |                    |
| <b>Secular<sup>2</sup></b>                                       |                     | .057<br>(.0528)   |                   |                    |
| <b>Frequency of prayer</b>                                       |                     | -.031*<br>(.0150) |                   | -.027*<br>(.0106)  |
| <b>Frequency of attendance</b>                                   |                     | -.0136<br>(.0127) |                   |                    |
| <b>Guidance</b>  |                     | -.008<br>(.0192)  |                   |                    |
| <b>Hostile sexism</b>  |                     |                   | -.035*<br>(.0154) | -.114**<br>(.0403) |
| <b>Benevolent sexism (paternalism)</b>                           |                     |                   | .011<br>(.0125)   |                    |
| <b>Benevolent sexism (heterosexual intimacy)</b>                 |                     |                   | -.018<br>(.0110)  |                    |
| <b>Benevolent sexism (positive stereotypes)</b>                  |                     |                   | .032*<br>(.0132)  | -.067<br>(.0455)   |
| <b>Hostile sexism X Benevolent sexism (positive stereotypes)</b> |                     |                   |                   | .021*<br>(.0097)   |
| <b>N</b>   | 181                 | 181               | 181               | 181                |
| <b>R<sup>2</sup></b>   | .0974               | .1842             | .1788             | .2185              |

Note. \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ . Standard errors in parentheses. <sup>1</sup>Reference group is white.

<sup>2</sup>Reference group is conservative Protestants.