The Influence of Perceiver and Target Race in Hostile and Benevolent Sexist Attitudes

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Abstract

The present research investigates whether benevolent and hostile sexism are applied differently *by* Black and White U.S. Americans *to* Black and White women. Participants reported their sexist attitudes while thinking about Black women, White women, or women in general. Although Black participants reported higher levels of benevolent and hostile sexism overall, participant race and target race interacted to produce unique effects on sexist attitudes. More specifically, Black perceivers thinking of White women reported higher levels of hostile sexism than those thinking of Black women. White perceivers thinking of Black women reported higher levels of hostile sexism than those thinking of White women. With regard to benevolent sexism, participants thinking of Black women reported higher levels of benevolent sexism than did those thinking of White women. The results also suggested more similarity between sexism toward White women and sexism toward women in general, suggesting that our current understanding of sexism better reflects an understanding of sexism directed toward White women rather than women in general, suggesting the necessity for further research that considers the role of target and perceiver race in understanding sexist attitudes.

Keywords: benevolent sexism; hostile sexism; intersectionality; race; gender; attitudes

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"Racism has always been a divisive force separating Black men and White men, and sexism has been a force that unites the two groups," bell hooks, prominent professor, feminist and social activist noted in her 1981 book, *Ain't I a woman?: Black Women and Feminism*. Sexism is a form of prejudice that impacts women across cultures and racial groups (Glick & Fiske, 1997); however, the psychological literature has largely focused on sexism by people (in general) toward women (in general), ignoring possible differences in the sexism directed toward women of various races, by people of different races. In the current research, we use ambivalent sexism theory (Glick & Fiske, 1997, 2001) as a framework to examine whether Black and White people differently direct hostile and benevolent forms of sexism toward Black and White women.

Ambivalent Sexism

Ambivalent sexism theory posits that women face two separate-but-related forms of sexism, particularly in the context of heterosexual relationships: hostile and benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1997, 2001). Benevolent and hostile sexism has been assessed widely using the 22-item Ambivalent sexism Inventory (ASI; Glick & Fiske, 1997), with 11 items each to measure benevolent and hostile sexism directed toward women in general. Existing research has found that the ASI is cross-culturally relevant and valid, and that benevolent and hostile sexism are positively correlated concepts (Glick et al., 2000).

Hostile sexism consists of overt negativity toward women, who are seen as men's opponents in a "battle of the sexes" (Glick et al., 2000; Glick & Fiske, 2001). Hostile sexists view women as manipulative, power-hungry, and controlling, utilizing affection, sex, and feminism to achieve their goals. A core component of hostile sexism is coercive male power:

negative attitudes toward women maintain male dominance (Glick & Fiske, 2011). An example of hostile sexism is the belief that women seek to gain power by gaining control over men. Men consistently endorse more hostile sexism compared to women, and women who endorse non-traditional beliefs (e.g., feminists) are subject to higher rates of hostile sexism relative to women who adhere to traditional feminine roles (e.g., housewives; Glick & Fiske,1997; Glick et al., 2000). Indeed, preference for group hierarchy between groups, and gender specifically, is positively correlated with increased endorsement of hostile sexist views (Sibley et al., 2007).

Benevolent sexism is a complementary form of sexism that consists of positivity toward women, who are seen as pure, moral, and largely helpless. Benevolent sexists are outwardly protective and chivalrous; however, the chivalry is rooted in a belief that women are the weaker sex and thus need to be protected and shielded from harm and hardship. Because benevolent sexism still assumes women's inferiority to women, it is also detrimental to women's personal empowerment and agency (Dardenne et al., 2007; Glick & Fiske, 1997; Vescio et al., 2005), undermining their cognitive performance. Further, benevolent sexism is generally offered only to those women who behave in ways that align with traditional feminine stereotypes (Becker & Wright, 2011). In this way the two types of sexism act as a "carrot and stick" mechanism of controlling women within the patriarchy, offering protection and benevolence to women who "deserve it" because they accept their position within society and lashing out against women who buck against it.

Both men and women prefer benevolent sexism to hostile sexism, perhaps because benevolent sexism is perceived as far less overtly antagonistic than hostile sexism (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005; Bohner et al., 2010). Interestingly, past research suggests that while hostile sexism is easily identifiable, women are less likely to recognize sexism in covert, or "modern"

forms (i.e., benevolent sexism; Bohner et al., 2010). The negative undercurrents of benevolent sexism may go unnoticed perhaps in part due to a self-protective mechanism that hinders the detection of less overt prejudice (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005). Benevolent sexism may also be understood as both positive and enticing because of the perceived benefits, such as reverence and special care, (Hammond et al., 2016), which can make it psychologically easier to ignore the coddling and infantilization that often co-occur.

Race and Ambivalent Sexism

Glick and Fiske (2001) argue that, because power differences and intimate interdependence between men and women are cross-culturally pervasive, so too is ambivalent sexism. The theory is silent on whether women belonging to systematically disadvantaged or minoritized racial groups will face sexism of a different kind or amount than White women. To that end, the measure most commonly used to assess ambivalent sexism—the ASI (Glick & Fiske, 1997; Rollero et al., 2014)—asks respondents about beliefs regarding “women" in general and has been widely used across cultures and social contexts (Glick et al., 2000). Concern with women as a broad category is not *necessarily* a limitation of ambivalent sexism theory, or the ASI that is used to measure it, if the goal is to understand a “prototypical” sexism that is localized within a homogenous context.

However, prototypical sexism becomes problematic when contexts are heterogeneous, begging the question whether assessing sexism using generic labels like women adequately capture sexist attitudes towards all women. This is especially important in contexts such as the United States, where sexism and racism are deeply intertwined (Sidanius et al., 2018) and White people are seen as the cultural default of a person (i.e., the image brought to mind when thinking of a “person” is a White, middle-class, heterosexual male; Connor & Fiske, 2019), particularly to

other White people (Meissner & Brigham, 2001; Slone et al., 2000). Past research has shown Black and White women are subjected to different stereotypes regarding dominance, sexuality, and motherhood (Ghavami & Peplau, 2013; Rosenthal & Lobel, 2016; Rosette et al., 2016) and are treated differently based on those stereotypes (Cuddy & Wolf, 2013; Livingston et al., 2012), suggesting that the nature of the sexism they face would also be different.

Thus, ambivalent sexism theory might very well be a theory of ambivalent sexism *toward White women*. And, to take it a step further, it might very well be a theory of *White's people's* ambivalent sexism toward White women. Evidence supporting ambivalent sexism theory has come from a variety of samples (Glick et al., 2000; Glick et al., 2002; Mosso et al., 2019; Zaikman & Marks, 2014), but most of these samples consisted of predominately White participants, including the sample used to develop the original Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick & Fiske, 1997; between 76% and 86% White across six samples) and the shortened version (Rollero et al., 2014; 100% White). Indeed, Hayes and Swim (2013) showed that while both the internal reliability and validity of the aggregated ASI appears to be overall adequate (i.e., Cronbach alphas ranged from .86-.9) for Black, Latinx, White, and Asian participants, reliability was substantially lower for the benevolent sexism subscale in Black American participants (alpha = .67). The authors note that low sample sizes hindered reliable conclusions, highlighting the need for more intensive and up-to-date examination.

Research Overview

We know of only one study that has directly examined hostile and benevolent sexism toward Black and White women separately (McMahon & Kahn, 2016), highlighting the need for additional research. The current research replicates and extends past work by understanding whether the pattern of hostile and benevolent sexism directed toward White and Black women

differs for Black and White perceivers. We did not undertake this project with clear expectations for what we would find; instead, we fostered confidence in our results through a very high-powered design combined with an *a priori* plan for how we would analyze the resulting data. We did, however, have a series of competing hypotheses for what the pattern of results *might* look like.

Overall, we contrast whether hostile and benevolent sexism reflects group-based interdependence norms between Black and White people such that people express more hostile and less benevolent sexism towards outgroup women compared to ingroup women (*Outgroup Bias Hypothesis*). Alternatively, hostile and benevolent sexism can reflect shared positive attitudes towards the dominant racial group, i.e., White Americans, such that both Black and White people express less hostile and more benevolent sexism towards White women compared to Black women (*Prototypicality Bias Hypothesis*). We describe these two hypotheses in greater detail in the sections that follow.

Outgroup Bias Hypothesis

Both White and Black people self-report a preference for their own racial group compared to the racial outgroup (Jiang et al., 2021; Ratliff et al., 2020). People have more negative attitudes toward the outgroup than the ingroup, and more positive attitudes towards the ingroup compared to the outgroup. Hostile sexism represents a negative attitude, while benevolent sexism represents a, albeit nuanced and problematic, 'positive' attitude. Therefore, the *Outgroup Bias Hypothesis* is that White people will express more hostile and less benevolent sexism toward outgroup Black women than ingroup White women, and Black people will express more hostile sexism toward outgroup White women than ingroup Black women.

Support for the first part of this outgroup bias hypothesis—that White people will exhibit more hostile sexism toward Black than White women—comes from the literatures on stereotyping and perceived group threat. Two stereotypes of Black women that may drive higher levels of hostile sexism toward them are the *Jezebel* stereotype and the *Black Superwoman* stereotype (Waldron, 2019). The Jezebel stereotype depicts Black women as promiscuous and immoral, using sexual wiles to dominate men. The Black Superwoman stereotype depicts Black women as invulnerable, strong, and emasculating, thus disrupting the traditional power balance in which women are subordinate (Waldron, 2019). The *Jezebel* and *Angry Black Woman* stereotypes are overtly negative in valence, and both stereotypes run contrary to the traditional gender roles that women are expected to fulfill (i.e., compassionate, warm, nurturing and passive; Prentice & Carranza, 2002). This hypothesis is consistent with McMahon and Kahn's (2016) finding that participants directed more hostile sexism to a promiscuous Black woman than toward a promiscuous White woman. To the extent that White people are more likely than Black people to endorse these negative stereotypes of Black women (implicitly or explicitly), we might expect higher levels of hostile sexism among White than Black people.

Black women may also represent a threat to White people that results in increased hostile sexism toward Black than White women. The U.S. Census projections suggest that by mid-century, the percentage of nonwhite Americans will supersede White Americans (see Alba, 2016; Colby & Ortman, 2015; Craig et al., 2018a). The impending shift threatens the dominance of White Americans economically, politically, and culturally. Hostile sexism towards Black women may be an effort to maintain status quo and existing "traditional" social roles. White Americans tend to endorse their racial ingroup, supporting a more assimilative approach to diversity (Craig et al., 2018a, 2018b), perhaps due to Whites' feelings of threat associated with

projected increases in racial diversity (Craig et al., 2018b). Subsequently, a reduction in support for racial integration is likely, where White Americans may instead be resistant to further intergroup integration (Craig & Richeson, 2014). A reasonable manifestation of this resistance is higher levels of hostile sexism directed toward Black women.

Support for the latter half of the outgroup bias hypothesis—that Black people will exhibit more hostile sexism toward White than Black women—comes from the power imbalance that exists between Black and White people in the United States. White women are perceived as higher than Black women in the social hierarchy (Waldron, 2019), a disparity that is the result of past and present racism and White supremacy (Croll, 2013; Lewis, 1977). Thus, Black people may find that the hostile sexism themes of women being power-hungry and manipulative are more applicable to White women than to Black women. Indeed, there is research showing that White women can be particularly invested in upholding racism towards Black people, especially when they feel threatened, suggesting that the hostile sexism themes of desired domination and control can be uniquely applied to White women (Blee, 1992; Craig et al., 2012).

Prototypicality Bias Hypothesis

While outgroup bias is possible, there is an alternative possibility whereas both White and Black people assume that White women are the prototype of women and thus are more likely to be recipients of positive, and not negative forms of sexism. Black people feeling more hostile sexism towards ingroup Black women reflects tenants of system justification (Jost et al., 2004). The system justification theory supports the existing status quo within cultures and bolsters the social order (Jost & Banaji, 1994). In the context of the social justification theory, individuals are motivated to support the social order as necessary and justifiable to avoid cognitive dissonance. Subsequently, disadvantaged groups and minorities are encouraged to endorse existing social

dynamics that are potentially detrimental to their overall wellbeing (Jost et al., 2003). In accordance with the social justification theory, the minority group of Black Americans may be motivated to endorse contemporary stereotypes that frame Black women as angry, promiscuous, and emasculating (Waldron, 2019), which inadvertently supports hostile sexist perceptions of Black women (Glick & Fiske, 1997).

By endorsing stereotypes that frame Black women negatively, Black Americans are reinforcing the social hierarchy in which the majority (White people) maintain social dominance. This social hierarchy reinforcement exists, though people generally understand the issues White privilege imposes on the society (Croll, 2013). Further, Black women have historically been blamed for many of the issues that exist for Black Americans through the use of inaccurate and often aggressive stereotypes (Waldron, 2019). The stereotypes unfairly target Black women for a wide variety of social struggles within the Black community, including the oppression of Black men, rates of crime and educational problems amongst Black children (Waldron, 2019). These stereotypes within the Black community may further bolster negative attitudes towards Black women, which we assert would extend towards sexist attitudes. Taken together, this line of thought would lead to the hypothesis that, like White people, Black people will exhibit more hostile sexism toward Black than White women.

Similarly, White women are presumed to be the prototype of women's gentle characteristics of kindness, passiveness, and nurturing, traits that underlie increased feelings of benevolent sexism. In contrast, depictions of Black women as the *Angry Black Woman* stereotype (presented as aggressive, bitter, and irate; Waldron, 2019), places Black women as antithetical to the portrait of a woman deserving of benevolent sexism. In the only study that we know of that directly addresses our research question, McMahon and Kahn (2016) found that

(predominantly White) participants expressed more benevolent sexism toward White women than Black women when given no information other than race. These authors argue that White women are afforded more benevolent sexism than Black women because White women are more closely associated with the benevolent sexist ideal: women are pure, fragile, and in need of protection; Black female stereotypes (e.g., the *Jezebel*, *Angry Black Woman*, and *Black Superwoman* stereotypes described previously) violate this ideal. Further, these same authors argue in a later paper (McMahon & Kahn, 2018) that increased benevolent sexism toward White women stems from a combination of protective paternalism toward White women (i.e., an ingroup) and negative attitudes toward Black women (i.e., an outgroup). In sum, given that benevolent sexism is often viewed as being a positive attitude toward women, and that attitudes toward outgroups are generally more negative than attitudes toward ingroups, we might expect that White perceivers will exhibit more benevolent sexism toward White women than Black women, and that Black perceivers will exhibit more benevolent sexism toward Black than White women.

Current Study

The present study provides a high-power test of the following research question: will Black and White people differently direct hostile and benevolent sexism toward Black and White women? Black and White participants were directed to think about Black women, White women, or women in general while completing the short form of the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI; Rollero et al., 2014). This allows us to compare the degree of hostile and benevolent sexism elicited by Black women and White women, and to test whether one group is more similar to the general "women" group (i.e., the prototype for women).

Method

Participants

Participants were U.S. American citizen volunteers at the Project Implicit research website (https://implicit.harvard.edu; Nosek et al., 2002). 1084 White participants and 1691 Black participants reached the end of the study and are included in the analysis (Total $N = 2775$; see Table 1 for participant demographics).

Table 1

Study 1 Participant Demographics

	Black Participants (*n* = 1691)	**White Participants (*n* = 1084)**	**All Participants (*N* = 2775)**
Age (Years)			
Mean (*SD*)	37.3 (14.7)	34.43 (15.2)	36.2 (15.0)
Political ID (7-point; higher = more liberal)			
Mean (*SD*)	4.9 (1.4)	4.6 (1.7)	4.8 (1.6)
Religion ID (4-point; higher = more religious)			
Mean (*SD*)	2.5 (1.0)	2.1 (1.0)	2.4 (1.0)
Ethnicity			
Hispanic or Latino	2.9%	8.1%	4.9%
Not Hispanic or Latino	83.3%	82.8%	83.1%
Unknown	6.2%	4.2%	5.4%
Missing Data	7.6%	4.9%	6.6%
Highest Education Attained			
Elementary School	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Junior High	0.3%	0.0%	0.2%
Some High School	2.4%	1.4%	2.0%
High School Graduate	6.1%	4.0%	5.2%
Some College	27.1%	30.0%	28.2%
Associate's Degree	9.3%	10.1%	9.6%
Bachelor's Degree	18.0%	17.4%	17.8%
Some Graduate School	6.7%	12.6%	9.0%
Master's Degree/MBA	21.9%	16.2%	19.7%
Advanced Degree (PhD, JD, MD)	7.3%	7.4%	7.3%
Missing Data	0.9%	0.9%	0.9%
Sex			
Female	70.5%	71.5%	70.9%
Male	29.5%	28.5%	29.1%

Data from 1261 participants were collected between January 24, 2019 and January 31, 2019 based on an a priori decision to collect data from 1200 participants. During data cleaning, we learned that only 176 Black participants had completed the study; thus, we put the study back online between March 19, 2019 and June 18, 2019, but limited participation for this second data collection period to Black participants only. We made an a priori decision to collect additional data from Black participants for three months. A post-hoc power analysis with G*Power indicates that our sample size gives us greater than 99% statistical power to detect a small effect with a 2 X 3 between-subjects ANOVA.

Measures and Manipulation

Benevolent and Hostile Sexism. Participants completed the short version of the ASI (Rollero et al., 2014). Participants responded on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 = *disagree strongly* to 6 = *agree strongly*; the scales are scored such that higher scores indicate greater sexism. Six items measure benevolent sexism (e.g., Women should be cherished and protected by men; $\alpha = .79$; $M = 3.46$, SD = 1.18) and six items measure hostile sexism (e.g., Women seek to gain power by getting control over men; $\alpha = .83$; $M = 2.64$, SD = 1.15). The correlation between hostile and benevolent sexism was $r = .50$ ($p < .0001$).

Manipulation of Sexism Target Race. Participants read one of three sets of instructions for the ASI that directed them to a racial group to keep in mind while completing the measure. The instructions were as follows (manipulation in brackets):

> *You will be presented with a series of statements concerning men and [Black women / White women / women] and their relationships in contemporary society. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement.*

At the top of the screen for each question, instructions were re-stated:

> *Think about [Black women / White women / women] when you respond to the following questions and indicate how much you disagree or agree with the statement below.*

Procedure

Participants completed demographic information upon registration at the Project Implicit site. After giving consent, participants were asked to type in the sentence "I will complete this study with my full attention." Those who did so were then randomly assigned to complete one of the three versions of the ASI (Black women, White women, or the control: women in general). After the manipulated ASI, participants responded to thermometer ratings of Black and White women, two items assessing perceived discrimination against Black and White women, and a novel Black Women-White Women/Good-Bad Implicit Association Test (IAT; Greenwald et al., 1998). The thermometer ratings, perceived discrimination items, and IAT were included for exploratory purposes[1]; descriptive statistics for these measures are available on the project page on the Open Science Framework (https://osf.io/9n8xc/?view_only=4551c3f3c59f4af5869f22a1691ee696).

Results

See Table 2 for correlations between study measures and Table 3 for hostile and benevolent sexism by participant and target race.

Table 2

Correlations (r) between Hostile and Benevolent Sexism by Participant and Target Race [95% Confidence Intervals in brackets]. All p-values are less than .0001.

	Black Target	White Target	Race-Unspecified Target
Black Perceivers	.40 [.32, .47]	.46 [.39, .52]	.53 [.47, .59]
White Perceivers	.51 [.43, .54]	.54 [.46, .61]	.65 [.58, .71]

[1] Results from the exploratory items are not presented in the primary results section; however, they are included in the datasets posted in the supplementary materials on OSF.

Table 3

Hostile and Benevolent Sexism by Participant and Target Race

	Black Target	White Target	Race-Unspecified Target
Hostile Sexism			
Black Perceivers	2.71 (1.15)	3.01 (1.18)	2.50 (1.15)
White Perceivers	2.60 (1.12)	2.43 (1.09)	2.39 (1.06)
Benevolent Sexism			
Black Perceivers	3.92 (1.07)	3.76 (1.18)	3.67 (1.12)
White Perceivers	3.13 (1.04)	2.81 (1.07)	2.88 (1.08)

Hostile Sexism

A 2 (Perceiver Race: Black, White) X 3 (Sexism Target Race: Black, White, Control) between-subjects ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of perceiver race on hostile sexism such that Black perceivers reported higher levels of hostile sexism (M = 2.75, SD = 1.18) than did White perceivers (M = 2.47, SD = 1.09), $F(1, 2690) = 36.74$, $p < .0001$, $\eta_{p^2} = .013$.

There was also a significant main effect of target race, $F(2, 2690) = 13.66$, $p < .0001$, $\eta_{p^2} = .010$. Post-hoc analyses revealed that participants thinking of White women reported higher levels of hostile sexism (M = 2.79, SD = 1.12) than did those thinking of Black women (M = 2.66, SD = 1.14), $t(1806) = 2.38$, $p = .02$; Cohen's $d = 0.11$ or women in general (M = 2.46, SD = 1.12), $t(1808) = 6.10$, $p < .0001$, $d = 0.29$. Participants thinking of Black women reported higher levels of hostile sexism between those thinking of women in general, $t(1772) = 3.73$, $p = .0002$, $d = 0.18$.

These results were qualified by a significant interaction between perceiver race and sexism target race, $F(2, 2690) = 12.39$, $p < .0001$, $\eta_{p^2} = .009$. To understand the interaction, we will separately examine the influence of sexism target race for White and Black perceivers.

Black perceivers' hostile sexist attitudes. Black perceivers thinking of White women reported higher levels of hostile sexism ($M = 3.01$, $SD = 1.18$) than did Black perceivers thinking of Black women ($M = 2.71$, $SD = 1.15$), $t(1103) = 4.28$, $p < .0001$, $d = 0.26$, or women in general, ($M = 2.50$, $SD = 1.15$), $t(1074) = 7.27$, $p < .0001$, $d = 0.43$. Black perceivers thinking of Black women reported higher levels of hostile sexism than those thinking of women in general, $t(1074) = 3.00$, $p = .003$, $d = 0.18$.

White perceivers' hostile sexist attitudes. White perceivers thinking of Black women reported higher levels of hostile sexism ($M = 2.60$, $SD = 1.1$) than did White perceivers thinking of White women ($M = 2.43$, $SD = 1.15$), $t(701) = 2.04$, $p = .042$, $d = 0.16$ or women in general, ($M = 2.39$, $SD = 1.06$), $t(696) = 2.54$, $p = .011$, $d = 0.42$. White perceivers thinking of White women did not differ in their levels of hostile sexism compared to those thinking of women in general, $t(701) = 0.49$, $p = .620$, $d = 0.04$.

Benevolent Sexism

A 2 (Perceiver Race: Black, White) X 3 (Sexism Target Race: Black, White, Control) between-subjects ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of perceiver race such that Black perceivers reported higher levels of benevolent sexism ($M = 3.79$, $SD = 1.13$) than did White perceivers ($M = 2.94$, SD = 1.07), $F(1, 2673) = 380.31$, $p < .0001$, $\eta_{p^2} = .125$. There was also a significant main effect of target race, $F(2, 2673) = 13.09$, $p < .0001$, $\eta_{p^2} = .010$. Post-hoc analyses revealed that participants thinking of Black women reported higher levels of benevolent sexism ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 1.12$) than did those thinking of White women ($M = 3.40$, $SD = 1.23$), $t(1792) =$

3.78, $p = .0002$; Cohen's $d = 0.18$ or women in general ($M = 3.37$, SD = 1.17), $t(1762) = 4.40$, $p < .0001$, $d = 0.21$. There was no difference in benevolent sexism between those thinking of White women and women in general, $t(1798) = 0.53$, $p = .60$, $d = 0.02$. There was no significant interaction between perceiver race and sexism target race, $F(2, 2673) = 1.13$, $p = .27$, $\eta_p^2 = .001$.

Supplementary Analyses

As described in the Method section, we included a number of exploratory variables. None of the results obtained through confirmatory results changed when controlling for these attitudinal and demographic characteristics; we have included a full analysis in the supplementary material on the project page on the Open Science Framework (https://osf.io/9n8xc/?view_only=4551c3f3c59f4af5869f22a1691ee696).

One finding that may be of particular interest is that all of the results we present previously remain unchanged when statistically controlling for participant gender.

General Discussion

Sexism is a pervasive force for women in society and cross-culturally. However, the ways in which sexism manifests along intergroup lines is not well-understood. The present work adds to the existing literature on the intersectional nature of ambivalent sexism by assessing sexist attitudes *towards* Black and White women *by* Black and White perceivers. The results from a high-powered ($N = 2775$) study showed that Black perceivers reported higher levels of hostile sexism and benevolent sexism than did White perceivers, but the race of the target influenced levels of sexism. With regards to hostile sexism, White perceivers directed higher levels of hostile sexism toward Black than White women, while Black perceivers directed higher levels of hostile sexism toward White than Black women. In contrast regarding benevolent sexism, participants thinking of Black women reported higher levels of benevolent sexism than

did those thinking of White women or women in general. There were no differences in reported benevolent sexism between those thinking of White women or women in general, nor was there any significant interaction between perceiver race and target race.

Thus, the Outgroup Bias hypothesis – reserving positive forms of sexism for the ingroup and negative forms for the outgroup – but not the Prototypical Bias – in which both the positive and negative forms of sexism were directed towards White, prototypical women – was supported for hostile sexism, while *neither* hypothesis was supported for benevolent sexism. However, there was evidence of a Eurocentric bias (Devos & Banaji, 2005) in people's benevolently sexist attitudes, as the attitudes towards "White women" were indistinguishable from those of "women" with no racial category label. This suggests there are different intergroup dynamics at play in terms of the harmful and helpful dimensions of sexism and adds a layer of nuance to how the Ambivalent Sexism Theory and subsequent ASI (Glick and Fiske, 1997) may function, particularly within the domain of specific social and cultural confines (i.e., the United States of America).

Hostile sexism being primarily directed towards outgroup women is consistent with the idea that, unlike benevolent sexism, hostile sexism reflects a negative attitude toward women. That is, people have more negative attitudes toward the outgroup than the ingroup (e.g., both White and Black people self-report a preference for their own racial group compared to the racial outgroup; Jiang et al., 2020; Ratliff et al., 2020)—this is reflected in their hostile sexist attitudes. White participants directing more hostile sexism towards outgroup Black women is in line with several stereotypes about Black women overall, including dynamics that depict Black women as being promiscuous and dominating (*Jezebel*), angry and pushy (*Angry Black Woman*), or invulnerable and emasculating (*Black Superwoman*). Black participants directing more hostile

sexism towards White women is also in line with negative stereotypes of White women, including the *Karen* stereotype (Negra & Leyda, 2021) where White women are seen as entitled, obnoxious, and privileged women who often use their femininity to police the behaviors of others, especially racialized others. In both these cases, the specific, racialized stereotype of women overlaps with the general stereotypes of feminists, the prototypical group towards whom hostile sexism is expressed, suggesting that both Black and White Americans likely construct stereotypical renditions of outgroup women to justify expressing more hostility towards them.

In contrast, more positive attitudes towards women, i.e., benevolent sexism, were not dispersed based along group lines. Instead, both Black and White participants felt more benevolent sexism towards the group lowest in the racial and gender hierarchy: Black women. This is consistent with related work by McMahon and Kahn's (2016) showing that, among a predominantly White sample, Black women were afforded more benevolent sexism when they were presented as 'chaste', specifically when compared to chaste White women. Our work suggests that Black perceivers also afford Black women more benevolent sexism.

What remains unclear is whether Black and White perceivers extended more benevolent sexism to Black versus White women for similar reasons. Participants could be expressing more benevolent sexism as an antidote to the *Strong Black Woman* stereotype so many Black women face, seeing benevolent sexism primarily positively and perhaps deserved. Perceivers could also see benevolent sexism as a gendered version of the white savior complex, especially if the sexism is primarily directed towards Black women. The infantilizing nature of benevolent sexism is a complement to the white savior narrative that Black people need to be guided and protected due to their diminished cognitive abilities. Indeed, feeling increased levels of benevolent sexism towards Black women leads to greater justification of increased hostile

sexism when they move outside of the hegemonic confines of femininity. Additional research is necessary to further understand the motivations for increased benevolent sexism towards Black women specifically, while considering the role of chastity in ambivalent sexism (McMahon & Kahn, 2016).

The fact that group membership had a greater influence on hostile versus benevolent sexism suggests that the true function of sexism is coercive and harmful. The carrot (i.e., benevolent sexism) exists to justify the stick (i.e., hostile sexism) that keeps women in subordinate positions, but the nature of the carrot is more flexible than the nature of the stick. This finding also aligns with cross-cultural work on hostile and benevolent sexism: men always score higher than women on hostile sexism but the gender differences on benevolent sexism between men and women vary by culture and is dependent on expectations of egalitarianism and fairness (Glick et al. 2000; 2002). We are finding a similar pattern here with race, as the patterns of benevolent sexism do not easily conform to standard group explanations.

While benevolent sexism did not show evidence of Prototypicality Bias, meaning more benevolent sexism towards White women compared to Black women, we did see evidence of Eurocentrism overall, which is a form of prototypicality bias. Consistent with previous research, the present work identifies a positive correlation between benevolent and hostile sexism, which supports the notion that regardless of race, men and women are socially interdependent (see supplemental materials for complete correlations; Glick & Fiske, 2011). However, the pattern of benevolent sexism results in the current research suggests that when not specifying racial identity regarding targets, perceivers appear to think more about White women rather than Black women. With this possibility in mind, and without listing a race to consider, the Ambivalent Sexism Theory may be most appropriate in the context of *White* women rather than *women in general*,

particularly within the confines of the United States of America. Perhaps this can be explained through the lens of prototypicality: in the context of the United States, benevolent sexism seems to cater to the "traditional" stereotypes surrounding White women (e.g., being warm, chaste, and pure; Glick & Fiske, 1997) in particular, while women of other races and ethnicities who deviate from this prototype are not afforded the same treatment (Ghavami & Peplau, 2013).

Additionally, Black perceivers held overall greater sexist attitudes, regardless of the target, suggesting that Black Americans' support for hierarchy-enhancing sexism ideology might be tied to their relatively lower racial status. Indeed, system justification posits that it is those groups who would most benefit from a system change that can be the most resistant to it (Jost et al., 2004).

Further, other work shows a positive correlation between gender inequality and endorsement; here we might be seeing a negative correlation with any form of perceived inequality and sexism endorsement (Glick et al., 2000; 2004). Thus, Ambivalent Sexism Theory might also be most appropriate to understand attitudes *of* White people, rather than people in general. The addition of a marginalized identity might change the meaning of endorsing sexist attitudes, making interpretations more complicated. Further research is needed to understand if the consequences of holding benevolent and hostile sexist attitudes are the same across race.

With these ideas in mind, it may benefit future researchers to specify *who* they are referring to when they discuss sexism, perhaps by considering race and ethnicity, to ensure that the results reflect the group in question directly. Such careful treatment of group identity can help to further elucidate the experiences of sexism beyond the scope of culturally and socially bound prototypes that may be limiting the understanding of differences, impact, and downstream consequences of both benevolent and hostile sexism on women of different identities.

Relatedly, what encompasses hostile and benevolent sexist attitudes towards ingroup women might also differ by race. Here we asked whether the ASI had equivalence by target and holder race but did not interrogate the items themselves. What embodies a Black woman towards whom benevolent and hostile sexism is appropriate likely differs from that of a White woman, making even the ASI an imprecise tool to understand sexism towards Black women. As an example, research finds that a good White mother refrains from working while a good Black mother goes to work, suggesting drastically different norms that underlie "good" and "bad" women by race (Cuddy & Wolf, 2013).

Future research should also work to uncover the specific factors associated with Black and White perceivers' sexist attitudes. One possible avenue for exploration is to separate examine the three components of benevolent sexism: protective paternalism (i.e., affection and protection), complementary gender differentiation (i.e., women have traits that complement men), and heterosexual intimacy (i.e., men's sexual motivation for partnering with women may be influenced by a desire for psychological closeness; Glick & Fiske, 1997).

Moreover, we would like to see researchers employ both quantitative and qualitative techniques in assessment of the ways in which perceiver and target race influence sexist attitudes. Understanding complex identities requires allowing people to express that complexity in their own words. We hope this paper inspires other researchers to broaden the scope of their work to incorporate intersectional identities, including race, gender, and other group memberships.

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