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Perceived Partner Sexism and Stigma Consciousness: How 'Prince Charming' Undermines Relationship Satisfaction

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

PERCEIVED PARTNER SEXISM AND STIGMA CONSCIOUSNESS:
HOW 'PRINCE CHARMING' UNDERMINES RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS
PROGRAM IN APPLIED SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

BY

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CHICAGO, IL

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ABSTRACT

Perceived discrimination (outside of the relationship) relates to negative relationship outcomes, moderated by stigma consciousness (DeHart, 2017). Women who report higher (versus lower) levels of perceived partner benevolent sexism (i.e., perceptions of one's partner's endorsement of sexist attitudes) experience more negative relationship outcomes as well (Hammond & Overall, 2013; Hammond & Overall, 2014; Hammond & Overall, 2015). In addition, relationship partners adopt more traditional gender roles after becoming parents, which fosters benevolent sexism (Trillingsgaard, Baucom, & Heyman, 2014). In this study, married or cohabiting women with children were randomly assigned to either a benevolent sexism manipulation or control condition, prior to completing relationship outcome measures. We tested whether relationship outcomes differed depending on women's reported levels of chronic perceived partner sexism and stigma consciousness. Contrary to my predictions, we found that women who report higher levels of perceived partner sexism experienced more negative relationship outcomes when they were high (versus low) in stigma consciousness, but only in the control condition. For women who report lower levels of perceived partner sexism, there was no effect of stigma consciousness on relationship outcomes found in either condition. Findings suggest that chronic perceived partner sexism moderates the relation between stigma consciousness, condition, and relationship outcomes. However, the pattern of results contradicts previous research, theory, and our predictions and merits additional research.

THESIS

PERCEIVED PARTNER SEXISM AND STIGMA CONSCIOUSNESS: HOW ‘PRINCE CHARMING’ UNDERMINES RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION

Research demonstrates the importance of promoting healthy and satisfying romantic relationships. Romantic partners provide mutual support, protection against threat, and fulfill belongingness needs (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Feeney & Collins, 2015; Knowles, Lucas, Molden, Gardner, & Dean, 2010). These benefits contribute to relationship satisfaction and stability across time. However, partners must be willing to risk increased interdependence in order to have satisfying relationships (Murray, Derrick, Leder, & Holmes, 2008; Murray, Holmes, & Collins, 2006). Thus, interactions between romantic partners influence relationship functioning. Individuals respond differently when perceiving social rejection from close others (Murray et al., 2008; Smart Richman & Leary, 2009). Smart Richman and Leary (2009) proposed that certain forms of rejection (e.g., perceived discrimination) pose a threat to one’s social identity (as opposed to the self). For example, women high in stigma consciousness felt less loved and accepted by their partners after reflecting on experiences of perceived discrimination in everyday life (DeHart, 2017). Nevertheless, there is little work focusing on how perceiving discrimination, specifically sexism, from one’s partner (perceived partner sexism) may influence relationship functioning. Thus, the current study aimed to evaluate the relation between chronic perceived partner sexism, a sexism manipulation, and stigma consciousness in predicting relationship satisfaction.

Close Relationships and the Need-To-Belong

There is a fundamental need-to-belong; failing to meet said need has far-reaching consequences (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). In fact, all major causes of death are higher among those who lack the proper social bonds and connections (Baumeister, 2012). Thus, it is integral that persons be able to meet this need. Individuals can fulfill belongingness needs through a series of non-negative social interactions and the existence of a network of social support (Baumeister, 2012). Romantic relationship partners provide support, love, and a long-term source of belonging. Maximizing relationship satisfaction for those who enter into romantic relationships is of the utmost importance and serves as a means of fulfilling belongingness needs.

Close relationships serve important functions; however, simply being in a relationship is not sufficient for one to reap its benefits. Relationships work best when relationship satisfaction is high (Feeney & Collins, 2015; Murray & Holmes, 2007). Thus, relationship satisfaction is a necessary component for achieving positive outcomes within the relationship context and beyond. Fostering relationship satisfaction requires that relationship partners assume the risk of increased dependence. Increasing dependence also increases the risk of interpersonal rejection. According to the risk regulation model, perceived rejection from one's partner leads to prioritization of either self-protection or relationship-promotion goals (Murray et al., 2008). However, sensitivity to the possibility of rejection varies across persons. Following perceived rejection, individuals with low self-esteem are more likely to prioritize self-protection goals and distance themselves from their partner. On the other hand, perceived rejection prompts individuals with high self-esteem to prioritize relationship-promotion goals, increasing dependence despite the risk of rejection. Thus, perceived rejection events may prevent the

maintenance of healthy and satisfying relationships among individuals with low self-esteem for whom the prospect of increased dependence inhibits relationship-promotion goals.

The previous research mentioned above focuses on how interpersonal threats to the self can influence relationships (Murray et al., 2008). However, social identity threats (e.g., prejudice and discrimination) ought to influence relationship functioning as well. Smart Richman and Leary (2009) proposed that one's construal of perceived rejection events predicts behavioral responses. The authors further described how different types of rejection share a common theme of threatened belonging. As a form of interpersonal rejection, perceived sexism (i.e., a social identity threat) should also influence relationship outcomes. In addition, there may be other individual difference variables (such as concern about being the target of sexism) which influence how people respond to social identity threats.

Ambivalent Sexism Theory

Ambivalent sexism theory proposes two complementary forms of sexism: hostile sexism and benevolent sexism. Hostile sexism involves blatantly negative attitudes and behavior towards women, including sexual objectification and the endorsement of traditional gender roles. Benevolent sexism involves subjectively positive attitudes and behaviors, such as unsolicited helping behavior from men and prescribed codes of conduct (e.g., "Women and children first"). Hostile sexism keeps men and women in their respective places through control and violence. Benevolent sexism works to justify gender roles albeit under the seemingly innocuous motive of the protection and appreciation of women (Glick & Fiske, 1997). Ultimately, both forms have a shared objective, namely the subordination of women to men. Hostile and benevolent sexism are complementary, rather than distinct, entities that perpetuate gender inequality.

Ambivalent sexist ideologies, which combine hostile and benevolent attitudes and behaviors, maintain the status quo. However, both forms of sexism perform specific functions in separate contexts (Glick & Fiske, 1997). Hostile sexism allocates power and status to men while characterizing women as power-hungry subordinates. This makes hostile sexism an effective means of maintaining the status quo while in the public sphere (e.g., the workplace). Even so, hostile sexist attitudes prove counter-productive when men enter the private sphere (e.g., romantic relationships). In these contexts, hostile sexism inadvertently sabotages male dominance through highlighting the existing social inequalities, which provokes women to act. However, benevolent sexist attitudes successfully persuade women to feel comfortable entering heterosexual intimate relationships. These attitudes use “dyadic power” to portray men as incomplete without a faithful and supportive female partner (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Thus, benevolent sexism serves as an adaptive complement to hostile sexism and promotes female buy-in through conferring certain benefits to them.

Benevolent Sexism and Relationships

Women in romantic relationships endorse benevolent sexism in response to perceiving that their partners endorse benevolent sexism. This occurs due to the financial and social benefits (e.g., protection, reverence, and care) promised by benevolent sexism (Hammond, Overall, & Cross, 2016). Hammond et al. (2016) examined the longitudinal implications of perceiving high levels of partner benevolent sexism. Perceived partner benevolent sexism significantly predicted women’s later endorsement of benevolent sexism, beyond male partners’ actual benevolent sexism. Thus, perceived partner sexism is an important and powerful component in examining the inner workings of romantic relationships, perhaps more so than actual partner sexism.

Specifically, benevolent forms of perceived partner sexism appear most relevant for studying how perceived sexism within relationships impacts relationship outcomes.

While there is some evidence to suggest that higher levels of perceived partner benevolent sexism are beneficial (e.g., indicating potential benefits for female partners); these effects may be limited to shorter-term benefits. Benevolent sexism is not sustainable over the long run and over time, men's failure to follow through with its prescriptions (i.e., financially supporting women) threatens relationship satisfaction and stability (Hammond & Overall, 2014). Relationship problems and hurtful partner behavior negatively relate to relationship satisfaction, especially among women who strongly (versus weakly) endorse benevolent sexism (Hammond & Overall, 2013). Men and women who endorse benevolent sexism also provide different types of relational support, resulting in different relationship outcomes (Hammond & Overall, 2015). Specifically, benevolently sexist male partners support style (i.e., dependency-oriented support) contributed to their partner's declining perceived regard and intimacy. Conversely, benevolently sexist female partners support style (i.e., relationship-oriented support) boosted their partner's perceived regard and intimacy. Despite its short-term benefits, benevolent sexism in relationships harms female partners' feelings of perceived regard, intimacy, and relationship satisfaction while promoting intimacy and goal pursuit for male partners in the long-term.

Stigma Consciousness as a Moderator

Chronic expectancies about being a victim of gender stereotyping should influence how women respond to reminders of partner sexism. Pinel (1999) developed the Stigma Consciousness Questionnaire (SCQ) to measure "the extent to which one expects to be stereotyped by others". Women high in stigma consciousness have chronically accessible

expectations about being stereotyped because of their gender, independent of their behavior.

Whether one engages in stereotypical behaviors or not, they may hold chronic expectations about being stereotyped by others. High levels of stigma consciousness contribute to negative outcomes (e.g., eliciting negative behavior from interaction partners) as chronic concerns about one's stereotyped status colors their outlook (Pinel, 2002).

Women high in stigma consciousness appear to be more attuned to signs of sexism in their environment. They are more likely to perceive discrimination (at all levels) and recall more concrete examples compared with women low in stigma consciousness (Pinel, 1999). High levels of stigma consciousness can be self-protective through warning women of potentially sexist situations. For example, highly stigma conscious women may recognize potentially sexist romantic partners early on and avoid pursuing a relationship with them. Even so, chronically perceiving sexism and attributing negative experiences to discrimination can harm interpersonal relationships in the long-term. Previous research shows relationship partners adopt more traditional gender roles during the transition to parenthood, during which time highly stigma conscious women may perceive higher levels of partner benevolent sexism (Trillingsgaard, Baucom, & Heyman, 2014). Thus, bringing female partners' attention to their partner's benevolent sexism ought to reduce relationship satisfaction levels, especially among women higher in stigma consciousness.

Stigma consciousness appears to be an important moderator of the relation between perceived discrimination and relationship functioning. DeHart (2017) revealed a relation between perceived discrimination and reflected appraisals, moderated by stigma consciousness. When asked to recall an experience of perceived discrimination (in general), women high (versus

low) in stigma consciousness reported feeling less loved and accepted by their partners. In the control condition, women reported similar feelings of love and acceptance across stigma consciousness levels. Thus, perceived discrimination is related to negative relationship outcomes for women high in stigma consciousness. It is important to note that all of the women recalled instances of sexism that did not involve their romantic relationship partner. The goal of the current work was to examine how experiences of sexism from female participants' current romantic relationship partners influenced relationship functioning.

Experiencing Chronic Perceived Sexism in Relationships

Despite the pervasiveness of sexist ideologies, women differ in the degree to which they perceive experiencing sexism. Some women may deny experiencing or perceiving sexism, while others readily perceive it. However, prior research suggests a relation between exposure to sexism and a number of negative physical and mental health outcomes (Fischer & Bolton Holz, 2007; Major & O'Brien, 2005; Salomon, Burgess, & Bosson, 2015). Even when it is subjectively positive (i.e., benevolent sexism), exposure to sexism negatively impacts emotions and stress responses. Women experienced greater cardiovascular reactivity and angry emotions when exposed to benevolent sexist (versus nonsexist) remarks (Salomon et al., 2015). Exposure to benevolent (versus hostile) sexism is related to impaired cardiovascular recovery. In addition, women reported similar levels of anger in response to recalled experiences of hostile and benevolent sexism (Bosson, Pinel, & Vandello, 2010). Thus, benevolent sexism appears as harmful as hostile sexism, resulting in negative emotional and physiological reactions. Further, the ambiguous nature of benevolent sexism could prevent women from attributing their negative experiences to discrimination, prolonging recovery and exacerbating its harmful effects.

As a stigmatized group, women exhibit chronic vigilance, scanning their environment for potential identity threats while determining whether the potential harm related to said threat exceeds their individual coping resources (Major & O'Brien, 2005). Over time, increased vigilance threatens one's health by way of repeated physiological threat responses. When interacting with a sexist (versus non-sexist) confederate, women's chronic experiences of sexism were positively related to cortisol levels (Townsend, Major, Gangi, & Mendes, 2011). In a second study, women who chronically experienced sexism reported similar levels of physiological stress whether the confederate's beliefs were known (i.e., clearly sexist) or unknown. Women reporting more chronic experiences of sexism experienced significantly greater levels of stress overall. As noted, exposure to benevolent sexism within relationships also contributes to negative relationship outcomes (Hammond & Overall, 2013; Hammond & Overall, 2014; Hammond & Overall, 2015). Due to the negative consequences associated with chronic experiences of sexism, women reporting higher levels of chronic perceived partner sexism ought to report lower relationship satisfaction even in the absence of reminders of their partner's sexism. In addition, reminding women of their partner's sexism should exacerbate the effects of higher chronic perceived partner sexism, further diminishing relationship satisfaction.

In line with previous research, we predicted that chronic perceived partner sexism would moderate the relation between the sexism manipulation and stigma consciousness in predicting relationship satisfaction. For women who reported lower levels of chronic perceived partner sexism, we expected stigma consciousness to be negatively related to relationship satisfaction, but only when they recalled an incident of sexism. This effect was not expected among women in the control condition. However, we expected different results among women with higher

levels of chronic perceived partner sexism. For women who reported higher levels of chronic perceived partner sexism, we expected the negative relation between stigma consciousness and relationship satisfaction to be exacerbated following reminders of their partner's sexism. We expected stigma consciousness to be negatively related to relationship satisfaction for women reporting high levels of chronic perceived partner sexism even in the control condition.

The Current Study

Past research demonstrates a relation between perceived sexism (outside of the relationship) and relationship satisfaction, moderated by stigma consciousness (DeHart, 2017). The current study evaluated this relation in a novel context by examining how a partner sexism manipulation influenced reported relationship satisfaction levels for women high (and low) in stigma consciousness, moderated by chronic perceived partner sexism. I expanded on previous work by focusing on perceived partner sexism, versus perceived sexism in general (i.e., sexism outside of the relationship). In addition, I focused solely on the effects of benevolent sexism in relationships. I proposed that perceived partner sexism would predict relationship satisfaction similarly to perceived sexism in general among women reporting lower levels of chronic perceived partner sexism. Under these conditions, I expected that stigma consciousness ought to moderate the relation between the sexism manipulation and relationship satisfaction. However, I predicted that women would respond differently to the sexism manipulation, depending on chronic perceived partner sexism. Thus, this study introduced chronic perceived partner sexism as a moderator of the relation between the sexism manipulation, stigma consciousness, and relationship satisfaction.

Secondly, this study focused on the experiences of married (or cohabiting) women with children in heterosexual relationships, given the tendency for relationship partners to adopt more traditional gender roles during the transition to parenthood, which fosters benevolent sexism. Across the transition to parenthood, both women and men report moderate declines in relationship satisfaction (Trillingsgaard et al., 2014). Another study found that stress pileup led to maternal psychological distress among African American mothers, which resulted in declining mother-child and intimate partner relationship quality, especially among women experiencing higher levels of racial discrimination (Murry, Brown, Brody, Cutrona, & Simons, 2001). Thus, social identity threat acted as an additional stressor that, combined with the stress of adopting more traditional roles as a mother, contributed to declining relationship satisfaction. Married (or cohabiting) women with children face barriers to ending a relationship with sexist partners, compared with those in more casual relationships, making it even more important to study perceived partner sexism among this specific sample.

Hypotheses

I predicted a significant three-way interaction between chronic perceived partner sexism, stigma consciousness, and sexism condition (sexism manipulation versus control) in predicting relationship satisfaction. Further, I predicted that the two-way interaction between stigma consciousness and condition would be significant for women who reported high levels of chronic perceived partner sexism as well as for those who reported low levels of chronic perceived partner sexism. However, I expected a different pattern of results for women who reported high (versus low) levels of chronic perceived partner sexism. I expected these interactions to behave as follows, in line with the two hypotheses detailed below:

Hypothesis 1. For women reporting lower levels of chronic perceived partner sexism, the two-way interaction between condition and stigma consciousness will be significant. When women who report lower levels of chronic perceived partner sexism recall a sexist incident, those high (versus low) in stigma consciousness will report lower relationship satisfaction. In the control condition, relationship satisfaction ratings will not differ across stigma consciousness levels for women with lower levels of chronic perceived partner sexism.

Hypothesis 2. For women who report higher levels of chronic perceived partner sexism, the two-way interaction between condition and stigma consciousness will be significant. Under high levels of chronic perceived partner sexism, the effect of the sexism manipulation should be pronounced such that women who are high (versus low) in stigma consciousness will report lower relationship satisfaction ratings. Even in the control condition, women who report high levels of chronic perceived partner sexism who are also high (versus low) in stigma consciousness will report lower relationship satisfaction, although this effect will be weaker than in the sexism condition. Thus, stigma consciousness should relate to relationship satisfaction ratings in both conditions, albeit to different degrees.

Methods

Participants

We screened 1099 potential participants on Amazon MTurk to determine whether they met eligibility requirements (i.e., 18 or older, female, heterosexual, currently involved in a relationship with a male partner whom they are currently living with, and currently living with their child (or children)) for the main study. Of these, we invited 227 participants who were deemed eligible to participate in the main study and sent an email invitation to participate. A

sample of 207 married or cohabiting women with children who were currently involved in a heterosexual relationship responded to the study online; however, only 177 were included in final analyses. Two participants who completed the main study were excluded from the analyses for not meeting eligibility requirements (i.e., answered the demographic questions differently than the screening survey). In addition, 5 participants were excluded for stating that they did not write about their current partner and 3 participants were excluded for improper responses on the writing portion of the study. A total of 14 participants were excluded for providing incomplete data. Finally, 6 participants were excluded from analyses because they did not complete the survey in good faith, specifically by failing to respond correctly to attention check items.¹ All participants (i.e., eligible or not) who completed the screener survey received \$0.04 as monetary compensation through MTurk. Following completion of the main study, participants received an additional \$2.20 as compensation via MTurk. Participants who completed both the screener and main survey were invited to provide their email address to be entered into a raffle for a \$50 gift card. Participant ages ranged from 20 to 70 ($M = 38.28$, $SD = 8.54$) and their reported relationship duration ranged from 1.08 to 42.50 years ($M = 13.85$, $SD = 8.46$).

¹ Participants who were excluded from analyses ($N = 30$), due to ineligibility, improper or incomplete responses, or for failing attention check items, did not differ from those who were included in their assigned experimental condition, $\chi^2(1) = .29$, $p = .59$. Participants who were excluded from analyses did not differ from those included in number of children (total and cohabiting), personal income, stigma consciousness, and self-esteem, all t 's < 1.37 , all p 's $> .17$. In addition, those who were excluded from analyses did not differ from those included in perceived partner benevolent sexism and perceived partner ambivalent sexism (i.e., the full measure), all t 's $< -.99$, all p 's $> .26$. However, participants who were included in final analyses tended to be older ($M = 38.28$) than those excluded ($M = 34.63$), $t(201) = 2.11$, $p < .04$. They also reported longer relationship duration (measured in years) ($M = 13.85$) than those who were excluded ($M = 9.71$), $t(200) = 2.42$, $p < .02$. In addition, those who were included reported higher household income ($M = 1.79$) versus those who were excluded ($M = 1.14$), $t(48.36) = 3.09$, $p < .01$. Finally, there were not enough counts in the cells to run chi-square analyses on ethnicity, employment status, education, and marital status; thus, we cannot make comparisons on these variables.

Procedure

Participants were informed that the purpose of the study was to evaluate mothers' attitudes about themselves and their relationships. After providing consent online, participants completed measures of demographic information, stigma consciousness, and chronic perceived partner sexism. Following these preliminary measures, participants were randomly assigned to the sexism manipulation ($N = 92$) or control condition ($N = 85$). Finally, participants completed measures of mood, relationship satisfaction, reflected appraisals, relationship closeness, and a manipulation check. After successfully completing the study, all participants were given instructions on how to submit their work and receive compensation from MTurk.

Measures

Demographics. Participants provided general information including their age, gender, ethnicity, relationship status, parental status, career, and education. Some items (e.g., gender, marital status) served as a check to ensure that participants deemed eligible for this study in the screening phase were in fact eligible to participate and thus, should be included in analyses (Appendix A).

Stigma consciousness. The Stigma Consciousness Questionnaire for Women (SCQ-W) was used to assess participants' level of stigma consciousness (Pinel, 1999) (Appendix B). Participants were asked to rate 10-items (e.g., "When interacting with men, I feel like they interpret all of my behaviors in terms of the fact that I am a woman") on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). Stigma consciousness was computed by averaging scores across items. A higher overall score indicated higher levels of stigma consciousness ($\alpha = .87$).

Self-esteem. The 10-item (e.g., “I feel that I have a number of good qualities”) Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was used to assess explicit self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965) (Appendix C). Participants indicated the extent to which they agreed with the items on a 7-point scale (1 = *disagree very much*, 7 = *agree very much*). Explicit self-esteem scores were calculated by averaging scores across all 10 items, following reverse scoring of the appropriate items. Higher overall scores represented higher levels of explicit self-esteem ($\alpha = .93$). Self-esteem was controlled for in analyses to ensure that effects were a result of the sexism manipulation, rather than differences in explicit self-esteem.

Chronic perceived partner sexism. Participants completed a short-form version of the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI), used in a previous study, to assess their beliefs about their current male partner’s attitudes towards women (Hammond et al., 2016; adapted from Glick & Fiske, 1996) (Appendix D). The adapted short-form ASI asks participants to rate their current partner’s agreement with 12-items on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Perceptions of current partner’s benevolent sexism (e.g., “Women should be cherished and protected by men”) and hostile sexism (e.g., “Women exaggerate problems they have at work”) are assessed with six items each. Participants’ ratings were averaged across the six items on each subscale, resulting in separate scale scores for perceived partner’s benevolent sexism and perceived partner’s hostile sexism. Since my predictions centered on chronic perceptions of partner’s benevolent sexism, only scores on the six items tapping perceived partner benevolent sexism were discussed and used in analyses. Higher scores on the benevolent sexism items indicate higher levels of chronic perceived partner sexism ($\alpha = .85$).

Reading comprehension filler task. A reading comprehension task was used to minimize the likelihood that the chronic perceived partner sexism measure might prime thoughts about sexism, affecting responses on later portions of this same study (Mallett & Woodzicka, *unpublished*). Participants were asked to read a short article about an irrelevant topic (i.e., the history of chocolate) and answer questions about it on the next page. Failure to respond correctly to these questions did not influence whether or not participants' data was used in final analyses.

Sexism manipulation. Participants were randomly assigned to either the sexism manipulation or control condition (see Appendix E). Participants were asked to recall a situation involving their partner and provide three to five sentences describing it in detail. Next, participants described how the situation they recalled made them feel. In both conditions, participants were also asked a series of follow-up questions regarding the event they recalled. The sexism manipulation condition served as a means of reminding participants of their partner's sexism by asking them to recall a sexist incident involving their current partner. The manipulation was designed to lead participants to think about their partner's benevolent sexism without directly referring to the listed behaviors as sexist. In the control condition, participants were asked to recall the last movie they saw in a movie theater with their partner and provide three to five sentences describing it in detailed. They were also asked to describe how the recalled movie experience made them feel.

Follow-up questions. Following the writing task, all participants were asked to rate how easy it was to recall the event, the positivity of the recalled event, the severity of the recalled event, and the frequency with which the recalled event occurs. All items were scored on a 7-point scale, with higher ratings indicating higher levels of the given construct (Appendix E).

Mood. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which ten mood-items (e.g., “annoyed” or “accepted”) described their current feelings on a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *extremely*). Mood was controlled for in analyses to ensure that sexism condition, rather than negative affect, was responsible for effects on relationship outcomes (Appendix F). ‘Positive’ mood items were reverse-scored and participants’ scores were averaged across all ten items as a measure of negative mood state. Higher scores indicate higher level of negative mood ($\alpha = .92$).

Relationship satisfaction. Participants completed a 4-item relationship satisfaction measure, rating their responses to several statements (e.g., “I am extremely happy with my relationship with my partner”) on a scale from 1 (*not at all true*) to 7 (*completely true*) (DeHart, Murray, Pelham, & Rose, 2003) (Appendix G). Relationship satisfaction was computed by averaging scores across all items. A higher score indicated higher levels of relationship satisfaction ($\alpha = .91$).

Reflected appraisals. Participants completed a 9-item reflected appraisals measure, rating their responses to several statements (e.g., “I am confident my partner will always love me”) on a scale from 1 (*disagree very much*) to 7 (*agree very much*) (Appendix G). A reflected appraisals score was computed by averaging scores across items. A higher score indicated higher levels of reflected appraisals ($\alpha = .94$).

Relationship closeness. The Inclusion of Other in the Self (IOS) Scale was used to assess relationship closeness (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992) (Appendix G). Participants were asked to select the image of overlapping circles (labeled “self” and “other”) that best described their relationship with their current partner on a scale from 1 (circles with no overlap) to 7

(circles that almost completely overlap). Higher scores were associated with greater overlap between the two circles, indicative of higher levels of relationship closeness.

Manipulation and compliance checks. Participants' responses to the writing task were read to assess whether they followed the instructions from the designated prompt. Participants who did not write about the intended prompt were excluded from analyses. Participants were also presented with the following statement: "The event I just recalled demonstrates that my current partner treats me differently because I am a woman" and asked to rate their response on a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*completely*). Finally, participants responded to the following statement: "The event I just recalled was something that occurred with my *current* relationship partner" by selecting either "yes" or "no" from a dropdown box (Appendix H).

Suspicion probe. Finally, participants were asked to provide a response to an open-ended question regarding the purpose of the study (i.e., "What do you think the current study was about?). Participants whose responses indicated understanding of the study's purpose or hypotheses were excluded from analyses (Appendix I).

Results

Random Assignment Checks

To determine whether random assignment was successful, I conducted independent samples t-tests, comparing group means on age, number of children (total and cohabiting), personal income, household income, relationship duration, explicit self-esteem, stigma consciousness, perceived partner benevolent sexism (i.e., chronic perceived partner sexism), and perceived partner ambivalent sexism (i.e., the full measure). This analysis revealed that participants in the control condition ($M = 4.34$) reported marginally significantly higher stigma

consciousness than participants in the sexism manipulation condition ($M = 4.03$), $t(165) = -1.73$, $p < .09$. In addition, participants in the control condition ($M = 37$) were marginally significantly younger than those in the sexism manipulation condition ($M = 39.47$), $t(174) = 1.94$, $p < .06$. None of the other analyses were significant, all t 's < 1.54 (or > -1.19), all p 's $> .13$. Next, I conducted two-way chi-square analyses comparing participants in the sexism manipulation and control conditions on marital status (i.e., dating versus married), ethnicity, employment status, and education. Analyses revealed that there was no significant difference in marital status across the two conditions, $\chi^2(1) = .19$, $p = .67$. As before, there were not a sufficient number of counts in the cells to run chi-square analyses on ethnicity, employment status, and education; thus we were unable to make comparisons on these variables.

Results indicated that random assignment was successful, apart from marginally significant differences in stigma consciousness and age, which we controlled for in other analyses. In addition, all future analyses controlled for marital status as there is the potential for differing levels of investment across dating (versus married) relationships to influence the results.² Finally, because we wanted to see the effects of perceived partner sexism on relationship outcomes as distinct of threats to the self, we controlled for self-esteem, too.

Manipulation Check

Sexism manipulation check ratings. To test whether the sexism manipulation effectively resulted in participants recalling an incident of sexism involving their current

² Multiple regression analyses were conducted, predicting relationship outcomes from marital status, condition, stigma consciousness, chronic perceived partner sexism, all two-way interactions, all three-way interactions, and the four-way Marital Status x Condition x Stigma Consciousness x Chronic Perceived Partner Sexism interaction to ensure that marital status did not moderate our results. The four-way interaction was not significant, $B = .16$, $\beta = .20$, $t(134) = 1.13$, $p = .26$. Thus, these effects (discussed below) do not appear to vary as a function of reported marital status.

relationship partner, an independent-samples t-test was conducted comparing participants in the sexism manipulation and control condition on their responses to the manipulation check item (i.e., “The event I just recalled demonstrates that my *CURRENT* relationship partner treats me differently because I am a woman.”) (see Table 1). If successful, participants in the sexism manipulation condition ought to have endorsed this item more strongly, compared with those in the control condition. The analysis revealed that participants in the sexism manipulation condition strongly endorsed the item, relative to those in the control condition. This suggests that the sexism manipulation was successful.

Table 1. Responses to manipulation check items as a function of manipulation condition.

	<i>Control</i>	<i>Manipulation</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Sexism Manipulation Check Rating	1.66	4.48	10.82	171.33	<.001
Ease of Recalling Event	5.21	6.32	4.07	129.53	<.001
Positivity of Recalled Event	5.52	4.89	-2.28	173.04	.02
Severity of Recalled Event	2.02	2.44	1.64	173	.10
Frequency Recalled Event Occurs	2.26	4.21	7.82	161.42	<.001

Additionally, I conducted a multiple regression analysis predicting participants’ endorsement of the manipulation check item from manipulation condition (-1 = control, 1 = sexism manipulation), stigma consciousness (continuous), chronic perceived partner sexism (continuous), the three two-way interactions, and the three-way Condition x Stigma Consciousness x Chronic Perceived Partner Sexism interaction. All subsequent multiple regression analyses follow these same procedures. First, I centered the continuous predictor variables (i.e., stigma consciousness and chronic perceived partner sexism) by subtracting the

sample mean from each score. These centered predictors were also used in all future analyses.

The analysis revealed a significant main effect for condition when predicting endorsement of the manipulation check item, such that women in the sexism manipulation condition more strongly endorsed the item compared with those in the control condition, $B = 1.59, \beta = .71, t(147) = 11.60, p < .001$. In addition, there was a significant main effect of stigma consciousness, which revealed that endorsement was higher among women who were high (versus low) in stigma consciousness, $B = .33, \beta = .17, t(147) = 2.82, p < .007$. The main effect of chronic perceived partner sexism was only marginally significant; however, the pattern of results suggested stronger endorsement among women reporting high (versus low) levels of chronic perceived partner sexism, $B = .19, \beta = .11, t(147) = 1.86, p = .07$. None of the two-way interactions nor the three-way interaction were significant, all t 's < 1.51 (or > -0.19), all p 's $> .13$. Even though there was a significant main effect of stigma consciousness, it did not appear to interact with any of the other predictors (i.e., condition and chronic perceived partner sexism) in predicting responses to the manipulation check item. Most importantly, women in the sexism manipulation condition endorsed this item more strongly than those in the control condition, in line with expectations. These results, combined with the absence of any significant interactions, suggest that the manipulation was effective in manipulating participants' thoughts about their partner's sexism.

Post-manipulation check items. To examine whether characteristics of the events participants were asked to recall may have influenced the results, I conducted independent-samples t-tests comparing participants in the sexism manipulation and control conditions on responses to the four follow-up questions (i.e., easiness, positivity, severity, and frequency) (see

Table 1). Analyses revealed that participants did not differ in the reported severity of the recalled event. However, participants in the sexism manipulation condition reported that recalling the event was significantly easier compared with those in the control condition. As suspected, participants in the sexism manipulation condition reported that the recalled event was significantly less positive than those in the control condition. Interestingly, participants in the sexism manipulation condition reported that the recalled event occurred significantly more frequently than those in the control condition. While I did not have any predictions related to these responses, it is interesting to note that participants in the sexism manipulation condition (who were asked to recall an instance of perceived partner sexism) reported that it was easier to recall relevant events and that these events occurred fairly frequently, when compared with participants in the control condition who recalled an experience with their partner at a movie theater.

Hypotheses

To test my hypotheses, I conducted a series of multiple regression analyses predicting relationship outcomes³ (See Table 2). There was a significant main effect of stigma consciousness, such that participants who were higher (versus lower) in stigma consciousness reported lower relationship outcomes. There was a marginally significant main effect of chronic perceived partner sexism, such that participants who reported high (versus low) chronic

³ Initially, I performed the same analyses separately for predicting relationship satisfaction, reflected appraisals, and relationship closeness. As expected, I found a similar pattern of results across the different outcomes and the scores on the three measures exhibited high inter-correlations (relationship satisfaction and reflected appraisals, $r = .82, p < .001$; relationship satisfaction and relationship closeness, $r = .78, p < .001$; reflected appraisals and relationship closeness, $r = .69, p < .001$; $\alpha = .96$). For this reason, I chose to combine them to form a global “relationship outcomes” variable ($\alpha = .96$). Thus, the analyses presented in this section concern predicted relationship outcomes as a whole, rather than the three separate outcomes.

perceived partner sexism reported higher relationship outcomes. However, the main effect of condition was not significant, suggesting that the assigned experimental condition cannot solely explain differences in reported relationship outcomes. In addition, the three-way Condition x Stigma Consciousness x Chronic Perceived Partner Sexism interaction was significant.⁴

Table 2. Relationship outcomes as a function of condition, stigma consciousness, and chronic perceived partner sexism.

	<i>B</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Condition	-.03	-.02	-.31	.76
Stigma Consciousness	-.26	-.21	-2.76	<.007
Chronic Perceived Partner Sexism	.15	.14	1.87	<.064
Condition X Stigma Consciousness	.09	.07	.89	.38
Condition X Chronic Perceived Partner Sexism	.11	.11	1.43	.15
Stigma Consciousness X Chronic Perceived Partner Sexism	-.04	-.05	-.62	.54
Condition X Stigma Consciousness X Chronic Perceived Partner Sexism	.13	.17	2.16	<.033

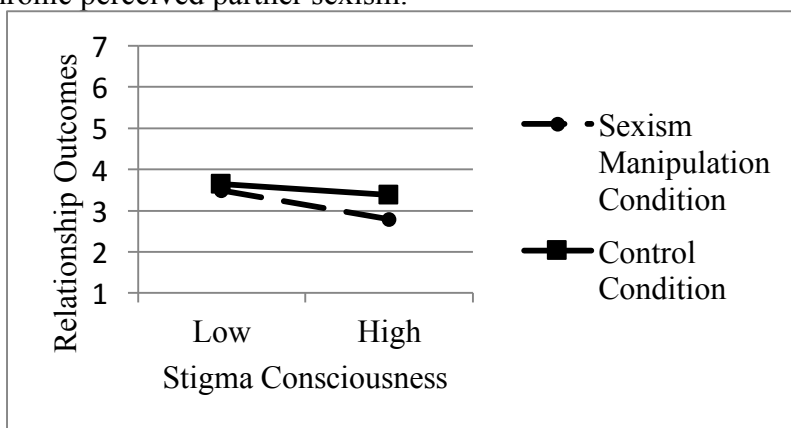
To determine the nature of the significant three-way interaction, I computed conditional moderator variables to represent participants who scored one standard deviation above (i.e., high perceived partner sexism) or below (i.e., low perceived partner sexism) on chronic perceived partner sexism, following the procedures described by Aiken and West (1991) for testing interactions. Then, I ran multiple regression analyses, substituting the conditional moderator

⁴ Separate multiple regression analyses were conducted, controlling for the effects of positivity and frequency, when predicting relationship outcomes. However, the same pattern of results remained. Even though the nature of the events participants recalled in the experiment may have different characteristics, these differences do not account for the overall findings in relation to the way in which perceived partner sexism impacts on relationship outcomes. Thus, I did not control for any of these follow-up question variables in the primary analyses.

variables into the regression equation one at a time in place of the original chronic perceived partner sexism variable.

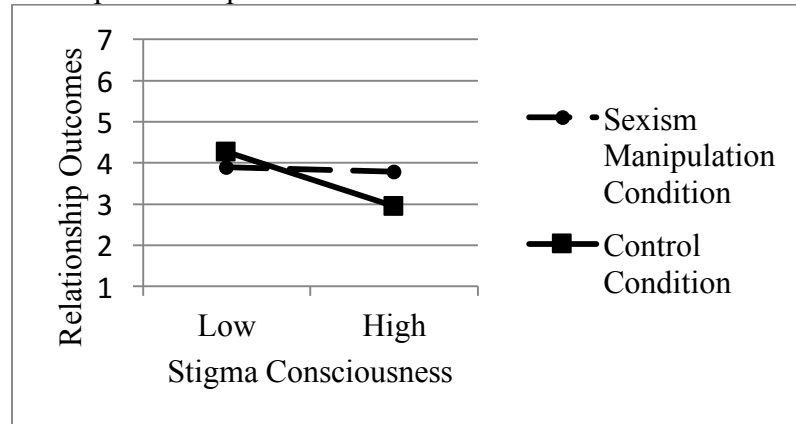
To test my first hypothesis, I examined the two-way Condition x Stigma Consciousness interaction predicting relationship outcomes among women who reported lower levels of chronic perceived partner sexism. Contrary to my predictions, the interaction was not significant (see Figure 1A), $B = -.09$, $\beta = -.08$, $t(141) = -.79$, $p = .43$.

Figure 1A. Relationship outcomes as a function of condition and stigma consciousness among women low in chronic perceived partner sexism.



To test my second hypothesis, I examined the two-way Condition x Stigma Consciousness interaction for predicting relationship outcomes among women who reported high levels of chronic perceived partner sexism. For women reporting high levels of chronic perceived partner sexism, there was a significant Condition x Stigma Consciousness interaction, $B = .26$, $\beta = .21$, $t(141) = 1.97$, $p = .05$ (see Figure 1B).

Figure 1B. Relationship outcomes as a function of condition and stigma consciousness among women high in chronic perceived partner sexism.



Next, I evaluated the simple slopes of stigma consciousness predicting relationship outcomes separately for those in the sexism manipulation and control conditions among women who reported higher levels of chronic perceived partner sexism. Simple slopes tests revealed that there was no significant effect of stigma consciousness on relationship outcomes among women in the sexism manipulation condition who reported high levels of chronic perceived partner sexism, $B = -.04$, $\beta = -.04$, $t(141) = -.23$, $p = .82$. However, among women high in chronic perceived partner sexism who were assigned to the control condition, analyses revealed that participants who were high in stigma consciousness reported significantly lower relationship outcomes than those who were low in stigma consciousness, $B = -.57$, $\beta = -.47$, $t(141) = -3.22$, $p < .003$. These results suggest that among women who reported higher levels of chronic perceived partner sexism, participants who were also high (versus low) in stigma consciousness provided lower relationship outcome (i.e., satisfaction, reflected appraisals, and closeness) ratings in their relationship with their current partner after recalling an experience in a movie theater. However, when asked to recall an instance of perceived partner sexism involving their current partner, women who reported higher levels of chronic perceived partner sexism did not differ in

relationship outcome ratings across levels of stigma consciousness. These findings contradict our expectations in the current study as well as previous findings regarding the way in which general experiences of sexism influence relationship functioning.

Additional Analyses

Mood effects. In addition, I examined potential effects on mood. I did not have any directional hypotheses regarding mood; although, I speculated that there may be differences in overall negative mood among women who were high (versus low) in chronic perceived partner sexism. In line with previous research, I combined all mood items into a general ‘negative mood’ factor. Then, I conducted multiple regression analyses predicting negative mood from condition, stigma consciousness, and chronic perceived partner sexism, all two-way interactions, and the three-way interaction (See Table 3). There was a significant main effect of stigma consciousness, which suggests that participants who were higher (versus lower) in stigma consciousness reported more negative mood following the writing task. The main effects of both condition and chronic perceived partner sexism were not significant. However, there was a significant three-way Condition x Stigma Consciousness x Chronic Perceived Partner Sexism interaction in predicting negative mood.

Table 3. Negative mood as a function of condition, stigma consciousness, and chronic perceived partner sexism.

	<i>B</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Condition	.13	.10	1.26	.21
Stigma Consciousness	.31	.27	3.48	< .002
Chronic Perceived Partner Sexism	-.07	-.07	-.94	.35
Condition X Stigma Consciousness	.16	.14	1.78	.08
Condition X Chronic Perceived Partner Sexism	.02	.02	.32	.75
Stigma Consciousness X Chronic Perceived Partner Sexism	-.09	-.12	-1.52	.13
Condition X Stigma Consciousness X Chronic Perceived Partner Sexism	-.13	-.16	-2.07	<.042

As before, I ran multiple regression analyses predicting mood separately for women who were high (versus low) in chronic perceived partner sexism in order to determine the nature of this significant three-way interaction. Among women who reported low chronic perceived partner sexism there was a significant two-way interaction between stigma consciousness and condition (See Figure 2A), $B = .33$, $\beta = .28$, $t(142) = 2.83$, $p < .006$. However, among women who reported high chronic perceived partner sexism, the two-way Condition x Stigma Consciousness interaction was non-significant (See Figure 2B), $B = -.00$, $\beta = -.00$, $t(142) = -.05$, $p = .96$.

Figure 2A. Negative mood as a function of condition and stigma consciousness among women low in chronic perceived partner sexism.

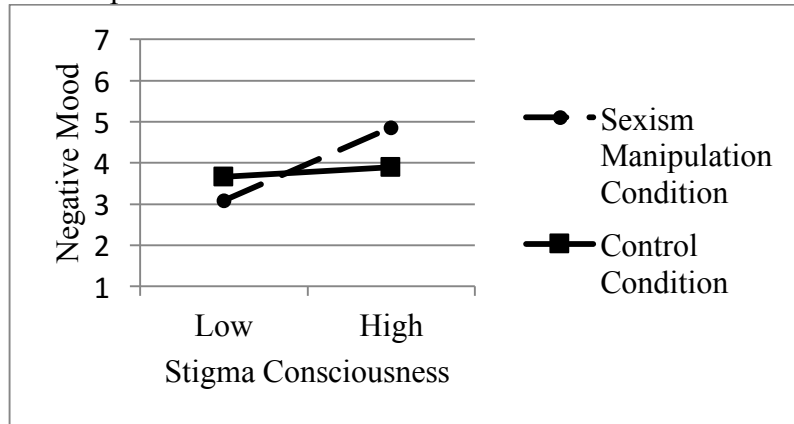
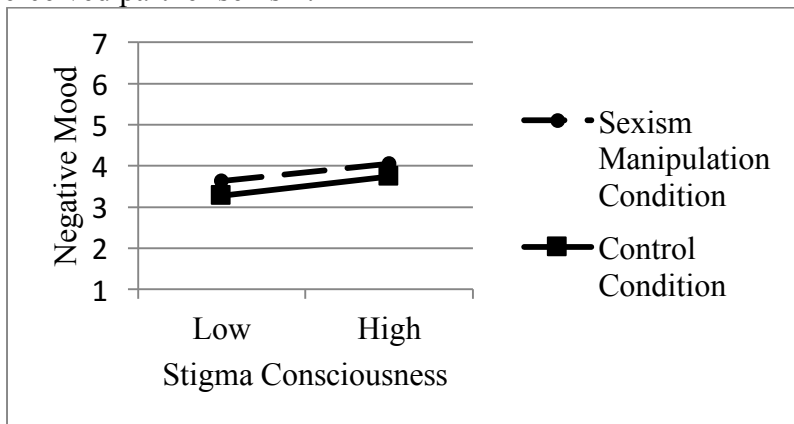


Figure 2B. Negative mood as a function of condition and stigma consciousness among women high in chronic perceived partner sexism.



Next, I examined the simple slopes among women low in chronic perceived partner sexism. Analyses revealed that there was no significant relation between stigma consciousness and negative mood among women reporting low chronic perceived partner sexism who were assigned to the control condition, $B = .10$, $\beta = .09$, $t(142) = .55$, $p = .58$. However, for women reporting low chronic perceived partner sexism who were assigned to the sexism manipulation condition there was a significant relation between stigma consciousness and negative mood, $B = .76$, $\beta = .66$, $t(142) = 5.16$, $p < .001$. Specifically, among women who reported lower levels of chronic perceived partner sexism, after recalling an instance of perceived partner sexism those

who were higher (versus lower) in stigma consciousness reported significantly greater negative mood. However, when women who reported lower levels of chronic perceived partner sexism were asked to recall a movie theater experience (with their partner), negative mood did not vary as a function of stigma consciousness. These findings demonstrate that the manipulation impacted participants' negative mood states, the pattern of results is distinct from that found when predicting relationship outcomes. Thus, our findings are unique from potential mood effects.

Discussion

The first hypothesis was that for women low in chronic perceived partner sexism, stigma consciousness would be negatively related to relationship outcomes only in the sexism manipulation condition. Contrary to the first hypothesis, stigma consciousness was unrelated to relationship outcome ratings among women low in chronic perceived partner sexism in both conditions. Regardless of the recalled event (i.e., partner sexism versus a movie theater experience), women low in chronic perceived partner sexism reported similar relationship outcomes across levels of stigma consciousness. The second hypothesis was that for women high in chronic perceived partner sexism, stigma consciousness would be negatively related to relationship outcomes in both conditions; however, this relation would be stronger in the sexism manipulation (versus control) condition. Contrary to the second hypothesis, stigma consciousness was negatively related to relationship outcomes for women high in chronic perceived partner sexism in the control condition and unrelated to relationship outcomes for women high in chronic perceived partner sexism in the sexism manipulation condition. These findings suggest that chronic perceived partner sexism moderates the relation between a sexism

manipulation, stigma consciousness, and relationship outcomes. However, the pattern of results contradicts both our initial hypotheses.

DeHart (2017) demonstrated that stigma consciousness moderates the relation between a sexism manipulation and relationship outcomes, such that women who were high (versus low) in stigma consciousness reported lower relationship outcomes after being asked to recall an instance of perceived sexism (in general). We expected to find a similar pattern of results among women low in chronic perceived partner sexism. However, stigma consciousness was unrelated to relationship outcomes among women low in chronic perceived partner sexism in both experimental conditions. DeHart's work involved experiences of sexism from perpetrators outside of participants' relationship, who likely engaged in hostile (versus benevolent) sexism. Our findings suggest that stigma consciousness may operate differently in the face of perceived sexism when the perpetrator of sexism is a close other (versus a stranger or acquaintance) as these contexts typically foster benevolent (rather than hostile) sexism.

Previous work revealed that chronic experiences of sexism resulted in physiological stress responses even when interaction partners are not confirmed (and perceived) as sexist (Townsend et al., 2011). Without reminding participants of their partner's sexism (through a sexism manipulation task), individuals in the control condition who reported higher levels of chronic perceived partner sexism likely held negatively connoted beliefs about their partner and their relationship simply due to their chronic experiences of sexism. In line with previous research, stigma consciousness ought to moderate the relation, resulting in different relationship outcome ratings, for which we found support.

Even so, it is unexpected that women high in chronic perceived partner sexism who were asked to recall an instance of partner sexism reported similar relationship outcomes regardless of whether they were high or low in stigma consciousness. One potential explanation for this pattern of results is that these women may be compensating for their partner's behavior. Murray (1999) proposed that romantic relationship partners are motivated to dispel doubts and reduce uncertainty when faced with their relationship partner's imperfections or faults. When women high in chronic perceived partner sexism were explicitly asked to recall an instance of their partner's benevolent sexism, they may have experienced doubts about their relationship. In line with the uncertainty reduction model, some women compensate for perceived faults, such as being benevolently sexist, by incorporating them into the framework of their partner's perceived virtues. Women high in stigma consciousness place more importance on issues of gender stereotyping and would be expected to compensate for their partner's sexism when it is explicitly brought up. However, when women high in chronic perceived partner sexism who are also high (versus low) in stigma consciousness are not directly asked about their partner's sexism, these chronic experiences erode their relationship outcomes, as evidenced in the control condition. Participants may report that they are relatively happy in their relationships as a potential means of compensating for (or minimizing) their negative experiences, which could explain why stigma consciousness did not influence relationship outcomes for these women.

Strengths and Limitations

One strength of the current study is that we used a continuous measure of chronic perceived partner sexism in conjunction with randomly assigning participants to either the sexism manipulation or control condition. As a result, we were able to examine whether past

experiences of perceived benevolent sexism from one's partner (i.e., chronic perceived partner sexism) interact with recalled experiences (by way of the sexism manipulation condition) in predicting relationship outcomes. We found that participants responded differently to the sexism manipulation as a function of chronic perceived partner sexism. This serves as evidence in support of chronic perceived partner sexism as a moderator.

Another strength of the current study is that we expanded on previous work by examining the effects of perceived sexism specifically from one's current partner, rather than looking at the effect of perceived sexism in general (i.e., outside of the relationship context). Previous research examined how participants rated their current relationship following reminders of perceived sexism (and rejection) from others who were not necessarily their current relationship partner. These findings build on previous work, showing that perceived benevolent sexism (from one's partner) holds negatively impacts relationship outcomes, specifically when partner sexism is not explicitly mentioned (Hammond & Overall, 2013; Hammond & Overall, 2014; Hammond & Overall, 2015). This work may contribute to future research and interventions through deepened understanding of the unique effects of perceived rejection on relationship outcomes when rejection comes from within (versus outside of) the relationship context.

A third strength is that we used specific sampling criteria to recruit participants, targeting women for whom these issues may be the most relevant. After relationship partners become parents, they typically assume more traditional gender roles (Trillingsgaard et al., 2014). Consequently, there is a higher likelihood that married or cohabiting mothers may report higher levels of chronic perceived partner benevolent sexism. For this reason, we selected a sample of heterosexual women who were married or cohabiting with a current male partner and who had

their child (or children) currently living with them as well. These relationships involve higher investment (in terms of division of labor, childcare, etc.) compared with more casual or non-cohabiting romantic relationships. As a result, women in our sample likely experienced additional barriers to exiting their relationships. Thus, we were likely to see variability in how women in our sample managed perceived partner sexism in their relationship, rather than ending the relationship altogether.

One limitation of the current study is that we recruited participants online via Amazon MTurk, which potentially minimizes the validity of our dataset. It is easy for respondents to lie or falsify data when using online surveys. However, we used a screening survey to minimize the likelihood that our resulting sample included ineligible participants. Nevertheless, future research should use different methods of data collection to examine sexism within relationships. For example, phone interviews or in-person experiments could improve validity. In addition, individuals using Amazon MTurk may differ in some way from the general population. Thus, future studies should supplement data collected online with data from alternative sources.

Another limitation is that we were unable to ascertain whether the participants endorsed sexist attitudes themselves because we did not measure them. Previous work suggests that attitude alignment (i.e., the degree to which both partners similarly endorse sexism) can influence the way in which perceived partner sexism affects relationship outcomes (Hammond et al., 2016). We did not measure participant's sexism due to the potential risk of priming thoughts of sexism. However, future research ought to determine the best way to navigate these concerns and include a measure of participant's sexism, too.

A third limitation is that individuals sometimes respond positively to their partner's sexism; although, we could not confidently attribute these responses to a single motive. Previous research shows that romantic relationships are commonly built on benevolent ideals, given the proposed benefits for women (and men) (Hammond et al., 2016). Women may respond favorably to their partner's benevolent sexism because they truly enjoy the benefits of being treated differently for their gender. They could also be unaware of the fact that said behaviors constitute sexism or they may be defensive and attempting to engage in self-preservation rather than confront the reality that their partner is sometimes sexist. Finally, this may be a compensation effect, as described in Murray's work. Thus, future studies should train coders to observe for these underlying motives or implement a measure to assess participants motives – regardless of how they respond to their partner's sexism (i.e., positive or negative). These measures ought to improve understanding of why there is such variability in how sexism in relationships impacts on relationship outcomes as well as whether compensation effects potentially explain our findings.

Future Directions

Future research ought to evaluate the effects of perceived partner sexism on relationship outcomes by asking participants to recall instances of ambivalent sexism in writing task prompts. Research suggests that benevolent sexism is more relevant (and thus, prevalent) within romantic relationship contexts (Glick & Fiske, 1997). However, hostile sexism may sometimes “bleed” into romantic relationships and similarly influence relationship outcomes. In addition, evaluating the effects of both forms of sexism should minimize the likelihood that women can selectively attend to the positive sides (i.e., “letting me do the activities I like”) of benevolent sexism and be able to objectively evaluate the shades of grey (i.e., “before the baby, I had a higher income – but

he told me to stop working”). This may also be more representative of real-life experiences as women typically experience both benevolent and hostile sexism from a range of sources.

Our scope was very narrowly focused on the experiences of heterosexual married and cohabiting women with children in this study. However, sexism occurs within a variety of contexts and types of relationships. Future research should replicate the current study with different samples, including men, gay or lesbian couples, casual relationships, or heterosexual/cohabiting women without children. Additional studies can broaden understanding of how perceived partner sexism operates to predict relationship outcomes differently across different populations. These findings can inform researchers on new directions of research on relationships and promote funding for less mainstream research topics.

Future research should examine the potential effects of chronically perceiving sexism from one’s partner on one’s behavior outside the relationship. As a form of social rejection, high levels of chronic perceived partner sexism could provoke individual concerns about belonging. In turn, individuals could be motivated to regain acceptance by their partner, despite this rejection, perhaps through conforming to their partner’s wishes. Previous work shows that social rejection in non-romantic contexts promotes deviant behavior (Walker, Bowen, & Brown, 2013). Chronic perceived partner sexism may be instrumental in promoting conformity and deviance as well. While we argue that chronic perceived partner sexism has the potential to increase negative relationship outcomes, there may be societal costs to having a sexist partner, which transcend the relationship context and ought to be addressed in future studies.

Conclusion

Media representations of romantic relationships are built on promoting benevolent sexist ideals, which young men and women come to expect from their relationship partner(s). Unfortunately, the current findings reveal that benevolent sexism in relationships may contribute to negative relationship outcomes among women with benevolently sexist male partners; although, in an unexpected manner. This research could influence the way in which relationship therapists address problems and perhaps help individuals to exit unhealthy relationships. In addition, these findings demonstrate the flawed way in which society (and the media) teaches young people about successful romantic relationships, which may actually contribute to negative relationship outcomes. Rather than attempt to change sexist attitudes, these findings illustrate the importance of interventions aimed at informing the public about the consequences of chronic perceptions of sexism, especially from close others. Teaching individuals how to confront sexism may be effective in helping to reduce feelings of helplessness for those involved in less than satisfying relationships. Finally, we should urge caution when asking women to discuss their partner's negative behavior(s) as this may lead to defensiveness and minimization of problems, which is particularly concerning when considering more extreme forms of sexism and power differentials in relationships (e.g., intimate partner violence). Overall, the current study demonstrates how sexism from one's partner is an equally (if not more) important factor to study as is general perceived sexism (and discrimination), which holds negative consequences for individuals within relationships.

APPENDIX A
SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Screening Questionnaire

1. Are you at least 18 years of age?
 - a. Dropdown: Yes/no
2. What is your gender?
 - a. Response choices: Female, Male, Prefer to self-describe (open-ended text box)
3. What is your current partner's gender?
 - a. Response choices: Female, Male, N/A – I do not have a current relationship partner, Prefer to self-describe (open-ended text box)
4. What is your current relationship status?
 - a. Dropdown: Single, Dating and not living with a significant other, Dating and living with a significant other, Married/remarried and not living with a significant other, Married/remarried and living with a significant other, Divorced
5. What is your sexual orientation?
 - a. Response choices: Straight, Heterosexual; Gay or Lesbian; Bisexual; Prefer to self-describe (open-ended text box)
6. Do you have any children?
 - a. Dropdown: Yes/no
7. Does your child (or children) currently live with you?
 - a. Response choices: Yes, No, N/A – I do not have any children
8. Payment Approval. Required: Please create a 7-digit code and enter it below to verify that you have completed this screener. Please do not use 1234567 or 7654321. These are commonly used options and if more than one person provides the same code, we have trouble

identifying your HIT and paying you. You must enter this same code on the request page on the MTurk website so that we can approve payment for your HIT and contact you if you qualify for the main survey. Remember, we need this information to determine if you completed this HIT so that we can approve your payment. Thank you!

- a. Response: Open-ended text box

Demographics

1. What is your date of birth?

- a. Dropdown: Month, Day, Year

2. What is your gender?

- a. Response choices: Female, Male, Prefer to self-describe (open-ended text box)

3. What is your ethnicity?

- a. Response choices:
 - i. African American, Black, African, Caribbean
 - ii. Asian American, Asian, Pacific Islander
 - iii. European American, White, Anglo, Caucasian
 - iv. Hispanic American, Latino, Chicano
 - v. Native American, American Indian
 - vi. Multi-racial, Bi-racial
 - vii. Prefer to self-describe (open-ended text box)

4. What is your current employment status?

- a. Dropdown: Full-time, Part-time, Self-employed, Stay-at-home-mother/caretaker, Unemployed

5. What is your sexual orientation?
 - a. Response choices: Straight, Heterosexual; Gay or Lesbian; Bisexual; Prefer to self-describe (open-ended text box)
6. What is the highest level of education you have received?
 - a. Dropdown: Less than high school, High school diploma or G.E.D., Some college or Associates degree, Bachelors degree, Some graduate school or Advanced degree
7. What is your current relationship status?
 - a. Dropdown: Single, Dating and not living with a significant other, Dating and living with a significant other, Married/remarried and not living with a significant other, Married/remarried and living with a significant other, Divorced
8. What is your current partner's gender?
 - a. Response choices: Female, Male, N/A – I do not have a current relationship partner, Prefer to self-describe (open-ended text box)
9. How many children do you have?
 - a. Dropdown: 0 - 10
10. How many of your children currently live with you?
 - a. Dropdown: 0 - 10
11. What are the ages of the children currently living with you? Please list the ages of the children currently living with you in the open box below. Use numbers only and place a comma between each age (e.g., If you have 5 children, list their ages like so: 2, 4, 5, 7, 9).
 - a. Response choices: Open-ended text box
12. How long have you and your current partner been together? Please skip this question if you

are not currently in a romantic relationship.

- a. Dropdown: Years (0-50), Months (0-11)

13. If you are married, how long have you and your current partner been married? Please skip this question if you are not married to your current partner.

- a. Dropdown: Years (0-50), Months (0-11)

14. How long have you and your current partner been living together? Please skip this question if you do not live with your current partner.

- a. Dropdown: Years (0-50), Months (0-11)

15. What is your personal income per year?

- a. Dropdown: Less than \$25,000, \$25,001-\$50,000, \$50,001-\$75,000, \$75,001-\$100,000, \$100,001-\$125,000, \$125,001-\$150,000, \$150,001-\$175,000, \$175,001-\$200,000, Over \$200,000

16. What is your household income per year?

- a. Dropdown: Less than \$25,000, \$25,001-\$50,000, \$50,001-\$75,000, \$75,001-\$100,000, \$100,001-\$125,000, \$125,001-\$150,000, \$150,001-\$175,000, \$175,001-\$200,000, Over \$200,000

APPENDIX B

THE STIGMA CONSCIOUSNESS QUESTIONNAIRE FOR WOMEN

Please indicate the extent to which you personally agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

- 7-point rating scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*)
1. Stereotypes about women have not affected me personally.
 2. I never worry that my behaviors will be viewed as stereotypically female.
 3. When interacting with men, I feel like they interpret all my behaviors in terms of the fact that I am a woman.
 4. Most men do not judge women on the basis of their gender.
 5. My being female does not influence how men act with me.
 6. I almost never think about the fact that I am female when I interact with men.
 7. My being female does not influence how people act with me.
 8. Most men have a lot more sexist thoughts than they actually express.
 9. I often think that men are unfairly accused of being sexist.
 10. Most men have a problem viewing women as equals.

APPENDIX C

THE ROSENBERG SELF-ESTEEM SCALE

The next measure is a global measure of your feelings about yourself. Please answer the next ten items using the following scale.

- 7-point rating scale from 1 (*disagree very much*) to 7 (*agree very much*)
1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others.
 2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
 3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.
 4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
 5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
 6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.
 7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
 8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.
 9. At times I feel that I am useless.
 10. At times I think I am no good at all.

APPENDIX D
CHRONIC PERCEIVED PARTNER SEXISM – ADAPTED AMBIVALENT SEXISM
INVENTORY

Below is a series of statements concerning relationships between men and women in contemporary society. Please rate the extent to which you believe that your CURRENT relationship partner agrees or disagrees with each statement.

- 7-point rating scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*)

1. No matter how accomplished he is, a man is not truly complete as a person unless he has the love of a woman.
2. In a disaster, women ought not necessarily to be rescued before men.
3. Most women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist.
4. Feminists are not seeking for women to have more power than men.
5. Women should be cherished and protected by men.
6. Women seek to gain power by getting control over men.
7. Men are complete without women.
8. Women exaggerate problems they have at work.
9. When women lose to men in a fair competition, they typically complain about being discriminated against.
10. There are actually very few women who get a kick out of teasing men by seeming sexually available and then refusing male advances.
11. Women, compared to men, tend to have a superior moral sensibility.
12. Women, as compared to men, tend to have a more refined sense of culture and good taste.

APPENDIX E

SEXISM MANIPULATION AND CONTROL WRITING TASKS

Sexism Manipulation Writing Task

For this task, we would like to learn more about your relationship with your **CURRENT** relationship partner. For the following prompt, please keep in mind that your response should focus on only your **CURRENT** relationship partner.

We all perform certain tasks associated with our assigned gender roles (e.g., men engage in physically-demanding tasks whereas women engage in nurturing or relational tasks, such as mothering, as well as less physically-demanding tasks, such as cooking and cleaning).

For this section, we want you to think about situations that are a common part of all relationships. Specifically, recall instances where your current partner engaged in chivalrous behavior, placed you on a pedestal, or assigned tasks in line with traditional gender norms and roles.

You may also think about times when your current partner assumed that you could not do certain things because of your gender and elected to perform those tasks instead (e.g., mowing the lawn).

1. Please describe the situation you recalled in detail in the box below. For example, what did your **CURRENT** relationship partner specifically do or say? Please write 3-5 sentences in the first box.
 - a. Response: Open-ended text box
2. Please describe how this recalled situation made you feel. Again, explain in detail how you felt when your **CURRENT** relationship partner behaved in the way you described above.
 - a. Response: Open-ended text box

Control Writing Task

For this task, we would like to learn more about your most recent experience at a movie theater with your CURRENT relationship partner. Please think about the last movie you saw in a movie theater with your CURRENT relationship partner. Specifically, recall details about the plot, the characters, the music, and the overall impression you had while watching this film.

1. Please describe the movie in detail in the box below. For example, what happened and what were the characters like? Please write 3-5 sentences in the first box.
 - a. Response: Open-ended text box
2. Please describe how the recalled movie experience made you feel. Again, explain in detail how you felt while watching the movie (described above).
 - a. Response: Open-ended text box

Follow-Up Questions

1. How easy was it to recall this event?
 - a. 7-point rating scale from 1 (*not at all easy*) to 7 (*very easy*)
2. How negative or positive did this event make you feel?
 - a. 7-point rating scale from 1 (*very negative*) to 7 (*very positive*)
3. How severe was this event?
 - a. 7-point rating scale from 1 (*not at all severe*) to 7 (*very severe*)
4. How frequently does this type of event occur?
 - a. 7-point rating scale from 1 (*rarely*) to 7 (*every day*)

APPENDIX F
CURRENT MOOD

Please indicate how the event you just recalled makes you feel right now, using the following scale.

- 7-point scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*extremely*)
1. Happy
 2. Hurt
 3. Appreciated
 4. Rejected
 5. Angry
 6. Accepted
 7. Sad
 8. Loved
 9. Included
 10. Annoyed

APPENDIX G
RELATIONSHIP OUTCOME MEASURES

Relationship Satisfaction

Please rate the extent to which the following statements are true regarding your relationship with your **CURRENT** relationship partner.

- 7-point rating scale from 1 (*not at all true*) to 7 (*completely true*)
1. Right now, I am extremely happy with my relationship with my partner.
 2. Right now, I have a very strong relationship with my partner.
 3. Right now, I do not feel that my current relationship with my partner is successful.
 4. Right now, my relationship with my partner is very rewarding (i.e., gratifying, fulfilling).

Reflected Appraisals

Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements in regards to your romantic relationship with your **CURRENT** relationship partner.

- 7-point rating scale from 1 (*disagree very much*) to 7 (*agree very much*)
1. Right now, I am confident that my partner will always want to look beyond my faults and see the best in me.
 2. Right now, I couldn't do anything that would make my partner think less of me.
 3. Right now, my partner loves me just as I am; he wouldn't want to change me in any way.
 4. Right now, my partner makes me feel very secure and confident about myself.
 5. Right now, my partner is less critical of my faults than I am.
 6. Right now, my partner sees special qualities in me, qualities that other people might not see.
 7. Right now, my partner overlooks most of my faults.
 8. Right now, I am confident my partner will always love me.

APPENDIX H
MANIPULATION AND COMPLIANCE CHECKS

Manipulation Check

Please rate the following statement in relation to the writing task you completed earlier in this study.

- 7-point rating scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much so*)
1. The event I just recalled demonstrates that my **CURRENT** relationship partner treats me differently because I am a woman.

Compliance Check

Please respond to the following statement in relation to the writing task you completed earlier in this study.

- Dropdown: Yes/no
1. The event I just recalled was something that occurred with my **CURRENT** relationship partner.

APPENDIX I
SUSPICION PROBE

In general, what do you think this study was about? What do you think the study's hypotheses were?

- Response: Open-ended text box

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VITA

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