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# Demographic Variables as Moderators Between Benevolent Sexism and Relationship Satisfaction

Dawna Jeanette Campbell  
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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Walden University  
2017

Abstract

Demographic Variables as Moderators Between Relationship Satisfaction and Benevolent

Sexism

by

Dawna Campbell

MA, Sam Houston State University, 2005

BA, Sam Houston State University, 1992

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Psychology

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August 2017

## Abstract

Romantic relationship satisfaction relates to better overall health, and identifying factors that affect relationship satisfaction could lead to better understanding of romantic relationships. This study examined the correlation between benevolent sexism, a subtle form of sexism resembling chivalry, and relationship satisfaction; gender, age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, education, and length of time were also considered as moderators. The ambivalent sexism theory, which posits that sexism is ambivalent and ranges from hostile to benevolent sexism, was the theoretical framework guiding this study. Previous research indicated benevolent sexism might predict relationship satisfaction. However, there remained a gap in the literature; the demographic variables above had not been considered as moderators in those analyses. Thus, the purpose of this quantitative non-experimental study, using data collected from a U.S. sample of adults who had been in romantic relationships for at least 1 year, was to determine if such links existed. Correlation and regression analyses revealed that benevolent sexism, measured by the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory, did not predict relationship satisfaction, measured by the Relationship Assessment Scale, and none of the demographic variables served as moderators. Results were trending toward significance though, suggesting that benevolent sexism might influence women's relationship satisfaction. Further research using longitudinal, mixed-method studies of dyads is recommended to gain a clearer understanding of this phenomenon. Findings would make important contributions to existing literature and enhance social change by providing professionals and individuals with an awareness of how benevolent sexist attitudes may affect relationship satisfaction.

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## Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my children: Anjela, Kyle, and Chris and my sister Elana, who have been understanding and supportive of me throughout this lengthy process. There have been many times when I was not able to talk on the phone or participate in family activities, and they all were tolerant and patient with me. I would also like to dedicate this dissertation to my sweet grandchildren: Taylor, Braydon, Brendon, and John Louis, who also were considerate of the times when “Grandmommy” was busy working on schoolwork. They have all been a great source of inspiration to me in completing this important part of my doctoral degree.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Introduction**

This study explores the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction. Researchers have indicated that romantic relationship satisfaction may be impacted by benevolent sexism, a subtle form of sexism that is subjectively positive (Becker, 2010; Glick & Fiske, 1996), though results are mixed (Casad, Salazar, & Macina, 2015; Hammond & Overall, 2013b). Potential moderators such as gender, age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, education, and length of time in the relationship were also examined between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction. There are multiple variables that can moderate the influence benevolent sexism could have on relationship satisfaction. For instance, there are differences in the endorsement of sexist views between men and women (Connelly & Heesacker, 2012; Gervias & Hoffman, 2013). Individuals of various ages also tend to have different attitudes toward sexism (de Lomas, Moya, & Glick, 2010; Gaunt, 2012), and researchers have indicated that ethnicity may be a factor in how individuals view the roles and status of men and women (Bermúdez, Sharp, & Taniguchi, 2013; Hayes & Swim, 2013). Individuals with varying levels of education likewise tend to report different opinions about sexism (Gaunt, 2012; Glick & Fiske, 1996), and religious beliefs appear to be related to sexism, as well (Hill, Terrell, Cohen, & Nagoshi, 2010; Maltby, Hall, Anderson, & Edwards, 2010). Results of some studies suggest that relationship satisfaction may be affected by the length of time spent in a romantic partnership (Casad et al., 2015; Hammond & Overall, 2013b). Therefore, these factors could have an effect on the

relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction. The ambivalent sexism theory is the theoretical framework used in this study, which is of a quantitative nature.

This information could be useful to clinicians and others who work with romantic couples. It could also create positive social change by enhancing knowledge about relationship satisfaction and the possible negative effect that benevolent sexist beliefs could have on individuals' satisfaction with their romantic relationships. Furthermore, findings from this study could increase public knowledge about the dangers of subtle prejudices, such as benevolent sexism.

In the following sections, a brief summary of the existing research pertinent to the current study is presented, and a gap in knowledge that is important to the discipline of psychology that this study addresses will be explained. More in-depth information about the central concepts of this study are provided in Chapter 2. Next, the problem statement is introduced, which further clarifies the gap in the current research. Then, the purpose of the study is described, and the research questions and hypotheses are presented. Finally, an explanation of the basic assumptions, scope, delimitations, and limitations that may affect the current study is articulated, and the significance of the study will be explained.

### **Background**

Sexism is prevalent in our society and aside from the obvious problems that sexism creates, such as discrimination against women and unequal pay for women in the workforce (Che, 2016; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015), there may be other issues that sexism creates, such as problems in our relationships (Casad et al., 2015; Hammond & Overall, 2013b). This is

important because, according to research conducted by Woods and Denton (2014), satisfaction in romantic relationships has been linked to individuals' overall health and well being.

Glick and Fiske (1996) posited that sexism is ambivalent and ranges on a continuum from hostile sexism, which is blatant sexism, to benevolent sexism, which is subtle and seemingly positive. According to research, individuals with benevolent sexist attitudes believe that women need the protection of men because they are the weaker sex. Women who ascribe to traditional gender roles are revered and protected (Glick & Fiske, 1996, 2001). However, benevolent sexism is not as positive as it appears to be. Individuals who hold benevolent sexist views believe that women are inferior to men, even though they may declare respect for women who endorse traditional feminine roles (Becker, 2010; Glick & Fiske, 2001). Thus, benevolent sexism is not as obvious as hostile sexism, and sexism is maintained in our society because many women, as well as men, endorse benevolent sexist ideas (Becker, 2010; Glick et al., 2000). Benevolent sexism has been linked to: (a) negative body self-perceptions (Shepherd et al., 2011), (b) less self-confidence, and (c) lower self-esteem in women (Barreto, Ellemers, Piebinger, & Moya, 2010; Dumont, Saulet, & Dardenne, 2010). In a recent study, Gaunt (2013) suggested that benevolent sexist views might have an impact on the way in which both men and women, who do not conform to traditional gender roles, are viewed. As such, this current study focused on benevolent sexism instead of sexism in general, or hostile sexism and included both men and women as participants to gain a clearer understanding of how benevolent sexism relates to relationship satisfaction for both genders.

Casad et al. (2015) indicated that romantic relationship satisfaction might be impacted by benevolent sexism. For example, results of a study conducted on a sample of college women in

romantic relationships with men indicated that benevolent sexism was predictive of poor relationship outcomes. Also, results of research suggested that decreases in relationship satisfaction for women when faced with problems in the relationship were predicted by their benevolent sexism scores (Hammond & Overall, 2013b). The association between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction may differ for men and women, however. Sibley and Becker (2012) suggested that, for men, benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction were positively correlated while the two were negatively correlated for women.

Romantic relationships are complicated, and there are some factors that could moderate the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction (Bermúdez et al., 2013; Hammond & Overall, 2013b; Sibley & Becker, 2012). There are differences in the way in which benevolent sexist ideas influence romantic relationship satisfaction for men and women (Sibley & Becker, 2012). There are also gender differences for the endorsement of benevolent sexism (Connelly & Heesacker, 2012; Gervias & Hoffman, 2013). Therefore, gender could have a moderating effect on the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction.

Age is another factor that could have a moderating effect on benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction. Previous researchers have indicated that there are differences in the endorsement of sexism for individuals of different ages. For example, de Lomas et al. (2010) found that sexism tends to decrease with age. In contrast, Gaunt (2012) indicated that benevolent sexism for women may increase with age. This suggests that age could have an effect on the correlation between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction.

Ethnicity might also influence the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction. Researchers have found that individuals of various ethnicities differ in

their endorsement of benevolent sexism and gender roles (Bermúdez et al., 2013; Hayes & Swim, 2013). Bermúdez et al. (2013) observed that both hostile and benevolent sexism were related to traditional beliefs about relationships in a sample of Hispanic adults. Hayes and Swim (2013) suggested that Euro-Americans are less likely to subscribe to benevolent sexism than Asian, African, and Latina/o Americans. Additionally, benevolent sexist views can impact relationship ideals for individuals of different ethnicities. In one particular study, researchers found that American participants who endorsed benevolent sexism had more romantic ideas about their relationships, but were also less likely to endorse benevolent sexism than the Chinese participants in the study (Lee, Fiske, Glick, & Chen, 2010). Thus, it was hypothesized that ethnicity could have a moderating effect on the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction.

Religious belief is another factor that could impact the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction. Glick, Lameiras, and Castro (2002) indicated that Catholic religiosity is a predictor of endorsement of benevolent sexism. Additionally, those who hold stronger religious fundamentalist beliefs tend to endorse benevolent sexism more than those who do not (Hill et al., 2010). In the current study, the moderating effect of religious beliefs on the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction was explored.

Education level could have an impact on the correlation between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction as well. Researchers suggested that there are differences in the endorsement of sexist views for individuals with varying levels of education. For instance, Glick and Fiske (1996) found that the way in which student and nonstudent men viewed women was affected by their endorsement of benevolent sexism. Gaunt (2012) found that education may be



negatively correlated with sexism. Thus, education level was considered as a potential moderator of the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction in the current study.

Finally, the length of time spent in a relationship may have a moderating effect on the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction. Some analyses have produced results indicating that individuals' endorsement benevolent sexism is related to a decline in romantic relationship satisfaction after a period of 6 to 12 months due to the unrealistic expectations of benevolent sexist beliefs (Casad et al., 2015; Hammond & Overall, 2013b). Therefore, in the current study, the length of time that an individual has been in a romantic relationship was analyzed as a possible moderator of the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction.

Even though there have been inquiries into the impact of benevolent sexism on romantic relationship satisfaction after a couple has been in the relationship for a period of time (Casad et al., 2015; Hammond & Overall, 2013b), the moderating effect of length of time has not been a focus of these studies. One study examined the differences in the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction for men and women (Sibley & Becker, 2012). However, gender was not examined as a moderator of the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction. In the literature examined, the variables of age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, and education level were also not considered as moderators of the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction, the two variables of primary interest in the current study. Therefore, this represents a gap in the existing body of literature, which this study aims to fill.

Because previous researchers have suggested that benevolent sexist beliefs may be related to romantic relationship satisfaction (Casad et al., 2015; Hammond & Overall, 2013b; Sibley & Becker, 2012), this study is relevant in order to clarify the relationship, and also to identify potential moderators of the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction. The results of this study provide more information about this phenomenon, which could be useful for counselors working with couples and others who need to understand romantic relationship dynamics. Such information could lead to the development of effective interventions to help couples increase relationship satisfaction, thus enabling positive social change.

### **Problem Statement**

Researchers have indicated that benevolent sexist views may have an influence on relationship satisfaction for romantic partners (Casad et al., 2015; Hammond & Overall, 2013b). Romantic relationship satisfaction might have a positive impact on individuals because it is associated with improved mental and physical health (Rhoades, Atkins, Dush, Stanley, & Markman, 2011; Woods & Denton, 2014). Therefore, consideration of factors that might affect romantic relationship satisfaction is important. The impact that benevolent sexism may have on relationship satisfaction, considering the moderating effects of gender, age, ethnicity, education level, religious beliefs, and time spent in the relationship has not been previously explored.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this quantitative, cross-sectional study was to examine whether there is a relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction for adult couples in romantic relationships and to determine the nature of the relationship between the two variables.

This study was further designed to examine the moderating effects of gender, age, ethnicity, religious preference, education level, and length of time in the relationship. The following research questions guided this study.

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

Research Question 1: Is there a relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction for adults' romantic relationships as measured by the ASI and the RAS?

*H<sub>01</sub>*: There is no relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction for adults' romantic relationships as measured by the ASI and the RAS.

*H<sub>a1</sub>*: There is a relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction for adults' romantic relationships as measured by the ASI and the RAS.

Research Question 2: Are there moderating effects of gender, age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, education, and/or length of time in a romantic relationship on the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction?

*H<sub>02</sub>*: There are no moderating effects of gender age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, education, and/or length of time in a romantic relationship on the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction.

*H<sub>a2</sub>*: There are moderating effects of gender, age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, education, and/or length of time in a romantic relationship on the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction.

Results from this study differed from the hypotheses. However, the results were trending toward significance when gender was analyzed as a potential moderator. The outcomes suggested that for women, benevolent sexism was marginally related to less relationship

satisfaction. There were no moderating effects of age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, education level, or time spent in the relationship on the correlation between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction. Results of additional analyses indicated that gender does moderate the relationship between hostile sexism and relationship satisfaction. For men, hostile sexism was related to less satisfaction in romantic relationships. These results together with similar results found in previous studies further explain the relationship between hostile and benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction for adult individuals in romantic relationships. This type of information would likely be helpful for marriage and couples counselors and others who need to understand romantic relationship dynamics more completely to develop targeted interventions by helping them to understand the various ways in which benevolent and hostile sexism affects men and women. This could also help couples to clarify expectations for both partners, and broaden their understanding of relationship dynamics.

### **Ambivalent Sexism Theory**

The ambivalent sexism theory, developed in the mid-1990s, suggests that sexism is ambivalent and ranges on a scale between hostile sexism, which is brazen and harsh sexism and benevolent sexism, which is a more elusive and seemingly gentle form of sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996). An important foundation of this theory is that there is an inherent paternalistic power hierarchy in most modern societies (Glick et al., 2000) and that men and women alike have benevolent and hostile sexist attitudes regarding power differences between genders, sex roles, and heterosexual relationships. Benevolent sexism is a form of sexism, where women are regarded stereotypically in traditionally feminine roles and are ascribed characteristics, which are subjectively positive, such as purity and cultural refinement (Glick & Fiske, 1996). There is a

belief that women are weaker than men, and thus should be protected by men. However, benevolent sexism is often not recognized as sexism due to these benevolent implications (Becker, 2010). Alternatively, according to Glick and Fiske (1996), hostile sexism is more obvious, and individuals who endorse hostile sexism view women more negatively.

Individuals can also be ambivalent in their sexist attitudes and have both benevolent and hostile sexist beliefs at the same time. For instance, some people have benevolent feelings toward women who behave in traditionally feminine ways but have hostility towards women who do not behave as such (Glick & Fiske, 2001). Some individuals may also have ambivalence toward men. Researchers have indicated that women may resent the power that is given to men, and describe men using negative stereotypical language, such as conceited and helpless. Likewise, according to Glick and Fiske (1999), women may also view men as the dominant gender, and have benevolent feelings of respect and affection toward men.

The ambivalent sexism theory has been studied to determine the prevalence of ambivalent sexism across nations and genders (Glick et al., 2000). Researchers have used the ambivalent sexism theory to determine if religious beliefs and ethnicity are related to benevolent sexism as well as hostile sexism (Bermúdez et al., 2013; Gaunt, 2012; Hayes & Swim, 2013). Education level and its relationship to ambivalent sexism have also been explored (Gaunt, 2012; Glick & Fiske, 1996), and the ambivalent sexism theory has been used to examine how individuals of different ages endorse benevolent sexism and hostile sexism (de Lumas et al., 2010; Gaunt, 2012).

The ambivalent sexism theory was deemed appropriate for the current study, which examined the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction, as well as the

potential moderating effects of gender, age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, education, and length of time in a relationship. Likewise, the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI) was deemed an appropriate instrument to use in the analyses (Glick & Fiske, 1996). A quantitative design using correlation and regression analyses allowed me to determine whether relationships existed among the variables. A complete description of this theory is presented in Chapter 2.

### **Nature of the Study**

A quantitative, cross-sectional survey design, incorporating correlation and multiple regression was chosen for this study because it is the best approach to examine complex relationships such as moderation. Benevolent sexism was the independent or predictor variable, and relationship satisfaction was the dependent or outcome variable. Moderator variables included gender, age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, education, and length of time in a romantic relationship, which were examined to determine whether they modified the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction. A one-time online survey was used to gather data from adult participants in romantic relationships—defined as monogamous dating, or cohabitating romantic relationships, or marriage, and participants who had previously been in such romantic relationships. The study participants were adults, aged 18 to 45 years and older. Only data from participants who had been in a romantic relationship for at least one year were included in the analyses to allow for the relationship to become established, and forms of interaction of the couple to emerge (Hammond & Overall, 2013a). The online survey method of data collection was chosen in order to reach a larger geographical area and age range of participants than would have been possible with a localized data collection procedure.

Participants were asked to answer demographic questions and questions about their relationship status before completing the ASI (Glick & Fiske, 1996), and the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS; Hendrick, 1988). Correlational analyses were performed to determine if there was a relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction for individuals in romantic relationships, using scores from the ASI and the RAS. Multiple regression analyses were conducted to determine whether gender, age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, education level, and/or length of time in a romantic relationship had a moderating effect on the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction. This was conducted using participants' scores from the ASI, the RAS, and the demographic information.

### **Definitions**

*Ambivalent sexism:* The concept that sexism is ambivalent and ranges on a continuum from hostile to benevolent sexism, and that individuals (both men and women) can have both hostile and benevolent sexist views toward male and female genders (Glick & Fiske, 1996; 1999).

*Benevolent sexism:* Benevolent sexism is a subtle and subjectively positive sexist attitude toward women, in which women are viewed stereotypically and in restricted feminine roles (Glick & Fiske, 1996).

*Ethnicity:* The definition of ethnicity is a social condition that encompasses culture, language, nationality, and race (Malesevic, 2010).

*Gender:* Gender is defined as the sex with which one identifies (van Anders, Caverly, & Johns, 2014).

*Hostile sexism:* Hostile sexism is an overt form of sexism, in which women are viewed negatively, especially women who do not adhere to feminine gender roles (Glick & Fiske, 1996).

*Relationship satisfaction:* The definition of relationship satisfaction is an individual's personal overall evaluation of his or her relationship (Graham, Diebels, & Barnow, 2011).

*Serious romantic relationship:* The definition of a serious romantic relationship for the purpose of this study is a committed, monogamous dating, or amorous cohabitating relationship or marriage.

*Sexism:* Sexism is defined as prejudice based on gender (Dick, 2013).

### **Assumptions**

One assumption of this study was that the volunteer nature of the participants would not bias the study. It was also assumed that the participants would be honest in answering the questions on the survey. Because the participants were recruited online, there was anonymity, which could lead to some providing false answers or false demographics, and there was no way in which to verify their answers. However, the identity of the participants was protected, which addressed this potential issue by assuring the participants' identity would not be shared.

Another assumption was that the ASI and the RAS would be appropriate instruments for measuring the main variables in the current study. Even though these measures have been used in similar studies and have been shown to be valid and reliable, there was no guarantee that the measures would provide data that would perfectly measure the constructs of this study.

However, these measures are acceptably reliable and valid for conducting research of this type (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Hendrick, 1988), and statistical analyses (Hayes, 2013) aided in decreasing the chance of obtaining false results.



Additionally, it was assumed that the demographic variables included in this study would be appropriately measured. Because this study was conducted online, there was no way to verify whether the participants answered the demographic questions honestly; deceitful answers could lead to false results of the analyses. However, the demographic questions were not particularly intrusive, and it was not likely that the participants would be deceitful when answering them. Also, the choices were comprehensive and included options for alternatives that were not included in the selections.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

This study was limited to individuals with access to the Internet, and to adults who have been in a romantic relationship for at least one year. This limits the generalizability of the study for individuals who do not fit these criteria. However, this was necessary to reach a broader audience via the Internet than could be reached locally. An adult population was specifically chosen to reduce the potential emotional harm that could occur if younger participants were recruited. The requirement for the participants to have been in a romantic relationship for at least one year was necessary to allow for the relationship to become established and forms of interaction of the couple to emerge.

This study only assessed benevolent sexism toward women; the ASI—the instrument chosen to assess the construct—measures benevolent sexism toward women. This is appropriate as the hypotheses best fit the ambivalent sexism theory, which proposes that in a patriarchal society, women are often discriminated against and considered less than equal to men. The main hypothesis is that benevolent sexism toward women would be related to romantic relationship satisfaction in the male and female participants in a negative way.

### **Limitations**

One limitation is that this study was correlational and only determined if a relationship existed between the variables, not any causal relationships. Additionally, this study is a cross-sectional study and not a longitudinal study, which would have provided more accurate information about how the length of time in a romantic relationship might impact the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction. However, a correlational, cross-sectional study was appropriate to answer the research questions and fit the time constraints and limited resources of the researcher.

The results of this study were further limited because only one partner in the romantic relationship answered questions about relationship satisfaction. Therefore, it did not provide information about how both partners in a relationship feel about their relationship, which would have been useful in understanding the dynamics of romantic relationships. However, both men and women were included in the study to gain insight into how benevolent sexism affects relationship satisfaction for different partners in romantic relationships.

Another limitation of this study was that the majority (84.2%) of the participants identified their race as Caucasian. This was a significant limitation as one of the moderator variables chosen for the study was ethnicity, and modifications to the original data analysis plan had to be made in order to assess for this variable. More detailed explanations of these limitations and their relevance to the results of this study are provided in the concluding chapters.

### **Significance of the Study**

The goal of this study was to determine whether a relationship existed between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction and whether age, gender, ethnicity, religious

beliefs, education level, and length of time in a romantic relationship moderated the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction. Information provided by this research could have clinical implications in that marriage and couples counselors might be able to use this information in the treatment of clients who present with romantic relationship issues involving sexist attitudes. For instance, if benevolent sexism was negatively related to romantic relationship satisfaction, counselors could assist couples in becoming aware of how such attitudes might be impacting their relationships. Counselors could use this type of information to understand what female clients are experiencing if they are in a relationship with a partner who ascribes to benevolent sexism, and also to help their male clients identify and challenge these beliefs. Therapists could use this information to help both male and female clients obtain a clearer view of their relationships and to identify ways in which benevolent sexist ideas can impact their expectations for their partnerships. Also, this information could be useful in assisting professionals to individualize treatments for their clients. For example, benevolent sexism appears to have a different effect on relationship satisfaction for men versus women, and understanding this could assist couples counselors in explaining this to their clients and mediating issues between them.

Given that satisfaction in romantic relationships has been linked to better psychological and physical health (Rhoades et al., 2011; Woods & Denton, 2014), additional research focusing on specific factors affecting romantic relationship satisfaction might result in increased romantic relationship satisfaction and longevity, thus contributing to positive social change. The implications for social change include a better understanding of the way in which subtle sexism impacts romantic relationship satisfaction, and the possibility to use this knowledge to improve

relationship satisfaction for couples in romantic relationships. For instance, if individuals have more awareness of benevolent sexism, they may have more realistic views of potential relationship outcomes and a clearer understanding of the gender-role expectations that are associated with benevolent sexist beliefs.

### **Summary**

Overall satisfaction in romantic relationships might be important for individuals' mental and physical health (Rhoads et al., 2011; Woods & Denton, 2014). Sexism, which is prevalent in society, is ambivalent. The ambivalent sexism theory indicates that sexism can be described as either hostile sexism, which is blatant, negative attitudes toward women, or subtle and subjectively positive attitudes toward women, which is called benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Research indicates that benevolent sexism may be related to romantic relationship satisfaction (Hammond & Overall, 2013b). There are also other factors, which may moderate the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction, such as gender (Sibley & Becker, 2012), age (de Lumas et al., 2010), ethnicity (Bermúdez et al., 2013), religious beliefs (Hill et al., 2010), education (Gaunt, 2012), and time spent in the relationship (Casad et al., 2015). Therefore, it is possible that these variables could moderate the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction.

The current study aims to fill a gap in the literature in which the possible moderating effects of the demographic variables mentioned above have not been explored about benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction. This study was conducted using a quantitative, cross-sectional design in which participants were asked to complete an online survey. The findings contribute to the existing body of research on benevolent sexism and positive social change by

increasing public awareness of the negative impact of benevolent sexism on romantic relationship satisfaction. It also addresses a gap in the research in which the demographic variables listed above had not been examined as possible moderators of the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction.

In the following chapters, the existing research relating to benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction is discussed, as well as a method for analyzing the data. In Chapter 2, literature on the topics of benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction is discussed, along with the ambivalent sexism theory, and studies are examining the potential moderators. Chapter 3 includes the research design and rationale, a description of the methodology, procedures, and instrumentation used. The possible threats to validity anticipated from this study and the ethical procedures to be utilized will also be presented. In Chapter 4, the results of this study are illustrated. Chapter 5 includes a detailed discussion of the results, conclusions drawn, and recommendations for future research.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

In this chapter, two forms of sexism are defined and described. Also, a gap in the existing body of literature about benevolent sexism and romantic relationship satisfaction including the possible moderating effects of gender, age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, education level, and time spent in the relationship will be identified. In addition to a background of the concept of benevolent sexism and research on relationship satisfaction to provide context for the literature review, this chapter focuses on a discussion of the ambivalent sexism theory and the possible impact of benevolent sexism on romantic relationship satisfaction.

Researchers have indicated that benevolent sexism, a subtle form of sexism may be related to relationship satisfaction for romantic partners (Casad et al., 2015; Hammond & Overall, 2013b). However, there are some factors that could moderate the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction. Gender may act as a moderator for the variables benevolent sexism, and relationship satisfaction as research indicates that there are differences in the endorsement of benevolent sexism for males and females (Connelly & Heesacker, 2012). Age is another factor that could moderate the correlation between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction (de Lumas et al., 2010). Ethnicity also could be a potential moderator between the two variables (Bermúdez et al., 2013). Individuals with various religious beliefs tend to endorse sexism differently, and this could be another moderator for benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction (Gaunt, 2012). Education could also be a moderator, as researchers have indicated that individuals with varying levels of education have different views related to sexism (Gaunt, 2012). Additionally, the length of time spent in a romantic relationship might

influence the correlation between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction (Casad et al., 2015). The impact that benevolent sexism may have on relationship satisfaction, considering the moderating effects of the variables mentioned above has not previously been explored. Thus, the purpose of this study was to determine if there was a correlation between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction for adult couples in romantic relationships and also to examine the moderating effects of gender, age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, education level, and length of time in the relationship.

Involvement in satisfying romantic relationships has been linked to individuals' overall psychological well being (Rhoades et al., 2011) and physical health (Woods & Denton, 2014). Rhoades et al. (2011) indicated that when romantic relationships end, individuals suffer from psychological distress and less satisfaction with their lives. Thus, it was important to consider which factors affect romantic relationship satisfaction. Current research indicates that sexism could be related to a decrease in romantic relationship satisfaction over time (Casad et al., 2015; Hammond & Overall, 2013; Sibley & Becker, 2012), and that sexist individuals are more likely to be single (Sibley & Becker, 2012). The ambivalent sexism theory suggests that sexism is ambivalent, and there are two main forms: (a) hostile sexism, which is easily identifiable as prejudice toward women; and (b) benevolent sexism, which is less easy to identify and appears to be nonthreatening and protective for women (Glick & Fiske, 1996). According to some researchers, benevolent sexism may be attractive to women entering into romantic relationships (Casad et al., 2015; Hammond & Overall, 2013b; Sibley & Becker, 2012). However, after the relationship is established, problems may occur due to the prejudiced nature of benevolent sexist beliefs and the inequality between the sexes such beliefs represent.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

The literature search for this study was conducted using the following databases: Academic Search Premier, PsycARTICLES, Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection, Google Scholar, SocINDEX, Thoreau Multi-Database, and Sage Premier. The key search words and phrases, used singularly and/or together, included: *sexism, ambivalent sexism, benevolent sexism, gender roles, relationship satisfaction, culture, ethnicity, religion, age, romantic relationships, education, healthy lifestyle, healthcare, Internet access, wellness, correlation, regression analyses, moderation, and gender*. The majority of articles used in this study were published within the past five years. However, several seminal articles are included relating to ambivalent sexism and relationship satisfaction that were published more than five years ago. Additional sources of information include a selection of books, government sites, and online newspapers relating to the topic.

### **Ambivalent Sexism Theory**

The ambivalent sexism theory (Glick & Fiske, 1996) was chosen for the current study because the assertion that sexism exists in a subtle, often unrecognizable form suggests that this type of prejudice likely affects romantic relationships. This theory relates to this study, in that gender-role observance inherent in the theory likely impacts romantic relationship satisfaction due to the expectations of the respective partners. For example, men who hold benevolent sexist beliefs will likely expect their female partners to behave in stereotypically feminine ways and vice versa (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Sibley & Becker, 2012). Also, given that benevolent sexism is a form of prejudice, this attitude will likely have a negative impact on the individuals in the



romantic partnership because of the belief that men are considered superior to women. Also, including the demographic variables of gender, age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, education level, and length of time in the relationship as potential moderators of the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction add to the existing literature regarding the phenomenon of ambivalent sexism. Results of this study provide a greater understanding of how this impacts individuals and society as well.

Sexism remains prevalent in modern society despite advances in women's rights (Berg, 2009; Brandt, 2011; Glick et al., 2000). However, sexism is not always easy to define or to discern. Certain forms of sexism can be expressed subtly and may not appear to be prejudice on the surface (Becker, 2010; Glick & Fiske, 2001). According to Glick and Fiske (1996), sexism toward women is ambivalent, and sexist attitudes fall somewhere on a spectrum between two main types: hostile sexism and benevolent sexism. Ambivalent sexism is based on gender differentiation and stereotypes of masculinity and femininity. The ambivalent sexism theory assumes that there is an inherent paternalistic power hierarchy in most modern societies (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Glick et al., 2000) and that men and women alike have ambivalent attitudes regarding power differences between genders, sex roles, and heterosexual relationships.

Gender-role socialization is also a central concept of the ambivalent sexism theory (Duran, Moya, & Megias, 2011; Glick & Fiske, 1996). This phenomenon begins at birth and continues into the early teen years with media portrayals of males and females in traditional gender roles. Recently, researchers examined television programming aimed at a tween audience and found that males were more likely to be cast in action-adventure shows with less emphasis on their attractiveness, while female characters were more likely to be portrayed as more

concerned with their looks and having their looks commented on more than male characters (Gerding & Signorielli, 2014). Researchers also found that biological parents' ideas of gender roles influenced their children's gender socialization process (Carlson & Knoester, 2011), and teenagers tend to associate with same-gender friends who share their gender-specific characteristics (Mehta & Strough, 2010). This trend continues into adulthood as young men and women are influenced by various forms of media to accept traditional gender roles in heterosexual relationships (Seabrook et al., 2016). Also, media selection has been found to be influenced by biological sex. In turn, the selection of gender-typed media reinforces stereotypical gender self-image (Knobloch-Westerwick & Hoplamazian, 2012). According to Von Hippel, Issa, Ma, & Stokes (2011), gender-role socialization also affects the way in which women are viewed in the workforce. However, Donnelly et al. (2016) indicated that individuals' attitudes toward women in the workplace are changing to be more egalitarian.

Glick and Fiske (1999) posited that individuals might have ambivalent attitudes towards men as well as women. According to these authors, women might have hostile attitudes toward men and resent the power that is afforded to men in a paternalistic society. In this type of sexism, women use negative stereotypes to describe men, such as being arrogant or helpless when sick. Women, on the other hand, may have benevolent attitudes toward men, such as feelings of fondness and respect for the more dominant gender. More recently, Zawisza, Luyt, and Zawdzka (2012) indicated that these attitudes continue to be present in modern-day society.

The ambivalent sexism theory informs a great deal of research. Some researchers have focused on the prevalence of ambivalent sexism (Glick et al., 2000; Sibley & Becker, 2012), and some have focused on the hidden dangers of ambivalent sexism (Becker, 2010; Gaunt, 2013).

Researchers have also used the ambivalent sexism theory to examine the connection between ambivalent sexism and relationship satisfaction (Casad et al., 2015; Hammond & Overall, 2013b; Sibley & Becker, 2012). However, there were mixed results concerning the nature of the relationship between relationship satisfaction and benevolent sexism.

Ambivalent sexist beliefs may take hostile or benevolent forms. Hostile sexism is an overt form of sexism where women are considered rivals to men and are viewed as attempting to assume the power that is ascribed to men in a patriarchal society (Glick & Fiske, 2001). In Glick and Fiske's (1996) description of hostile sexism, women are often described in negative stereotypical terms, such as being overly sensitive, demanding, and conniving. Benevolent sexism, on the other hand, is a form of sexism where women are regarded stereotypically in traditionally feminine roles and are ascribed subjectively positive characteristics, such as being pure and culturally refined. There is a traditional belief that women are considered weaker than men and should be protected by them. Benevolent sexism is not often recognized as sexism due to these benevolent implications.

Both males and females may hold hostile and benevolent attitudes toward women. An individual may view women as having negative and positive characteristics. For example, one may perceive women as being overly sensitive, but also as having better morals than most men. Additionally, some individuals place women into two different categories: (a) women who are traditionally feminine, and (b) women who are feminists; thus, they might ascribe positive characteristics to women who take on traditional gender roles and negative characteristics to those who do not (Gaunt, 2013; Glick & Fiske, 1997). This may not be as innocuous as it seems. Research indicates that when women are judged by stereotypes, even positive ones, their

emotional response may be negative (Siy & Cheyan, 2013; Von Hippel et al., 2011). This is further indication that benevolent sexist attitudes may be more harmful than benevolent.

### **Prevalence of Ambivalent Sexism**

Ambivalent sexism appears to be a global phenomenon and is not limited to only certain cultures (Glick et al., 2000; Sibley & Becker, 2012). Glick et al. (2000) supported this assertion in research conducted in 19 nations culturally distinct from each other, including Australia, Belgium, Botswana, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, England, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Portugal, Spain, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, and the United States. The authors found results indicating that both hostile sexism and benevolent sexism were prevalent attitudes in all nations studied. Results of their research indicate that both men and women endorsed benevolent sexism for all nations surveyed. However, scores were lower in nations considered egalitarian, such as the United States, England, and Australia. The mean scores for hostile sexism and benevolent sexism were positively correlated as well, which further indicates that benevolent sexism is indeed a form of prejudice towards women even though it is subjectively positive and protective.

In a more recent study by Sibley and Becker (2012), researchers found that ambivalent sexism was pervasive in the country of New Zealand and was endorsed by both men and women. Brandt (2011) conducted a study of sexism and gender inequality analyzing longitudinal data between 2005 and 2007 from 57 different societies. The results indicated that gender inequality was predicted by sexism for both males and females. This relationship was present when other factors representing the development of the country were taken into account.

In summary, sexism remains prevalent in most modern societies (Brandt, 2011; Glick et al., 2000), but because of a subtle form, known as benevolent sexism, it is not always identifiable as sexism (Gaunt, 2013; Sibley & Becker, 2012). Glick and Fiske (1996) addressed this concept with the ambivalent sexism theory, suggesting that there are two main forms of sexism: hostile sexism and benevolent sexism. Hostile sexism is more discernible as prejudice as it is open and malevolent. Benevolent sexism is also a form of prejudice even though it may appear to be less precarious on the surface.

### **Benevolent Sexism**

As noted above, benevolent sexism is prevalent in modern societies (Glick et al., 2000; Sibley & Becker, 2012), and it is much more accepted in today's society than hostile sexism because of the subjectively positive attitude toward women that those who endorse benevolent sexism exhibit (Becker & Wright, 2011). Individuals high in benevolent sexism view women as the weaker sex and believe they require the protection of men, and women who accept traditional gender roles are revered and sheltered. Benevolent sexism is related to chivalry in that there is the idea that men should protect the weaker individuals, in this case, women (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Phelan, Sanchez, & Broccoli, 2010), and can also be illustrated by the imagery of a man placing a woman on a pedestal.

Benevolent sexist attitudes perpetuate sexism in society because most people do not recognize benevolent sexism as a form of sexism, and if they do, most consider it to be harmless. However, underlying this "benevolence," is the inference that men are considered superior to women and the acceptance that women should remain in traditionally feminine roles, such as caregivers, housekeepers, and men's sexual partners (Becker, 2010; Glick & Fiske, 2001). As

such, women in the workforce may not be treated the same as men because of this phenomenon (Che, 2016). This could also have implications for both men and women. For example, a recent study focused on benevolent sexism and perceptions of individuals who do not conform to traditional gender roles. The results indicated that participants who endorsed benevolent sexism also endorsed more favorable views of women in the caregiver role, and negative views of men who were in the caregiver role (Gaunt, 2013). According to research conducted by Hammond, Sibley, and Overall (2014), women may tend to endorse benevolent sexism to gain status and admiration.

Benevolent sexist views can have a negative impact on how women view themselves. Shepherd et al. (2011) examined the effects of women witnessing benevolent sexism on their body self-perceptions. They found that women who experienced benevolent sexism reported more surveillance of their bodies and shame about their bodies than women in a control sample who were not exposed to benevolent sexism. In another recent study by Calogero and Jost (2011), participants were subjected to sexist ideas and then answered questions to assess self-objectification and the tendency to manage their appearance. Outcomes indicated that the women in the study who were exposed to benevolent sexism demonstrated an increase in their efforts to manage their appearances and their judgments about their bodies. This was not the case for the male participants in the study, and there was no similar response to hostile sexist ideas from any of the participants. There was also a condition in which there was no sexism presented, and there were no increases in appearance management or self-objectification for participants in that condition.

Results of an inquiry by Duran, Moya, and Megias (2011) suggested that benevolent sexism may moderate attitudes about violence towards women. These researchers conducted a study to determine if a relationship existed between benevolent sexism and attitudes toward forced sex in marriage. It was revealed that individuals with benevolent sexist views were more likely to regard forced sex in marriage as the duty of the wife than those who did not endorse benevolent sexism.

Research further indicates that benevolent sexist beliefs can impact women's self-esteem and sense of self-efficacy (Barreto et al., 2010; Dardenne, Dumont, & Bollier, 2007; Dumont et al., 2010). In one study by Barreto et al. (2010), Dutch college women were asked to read about the prevalence of either benevolent sexism or hostile sexism within the Dutch society, and then answer a brief questionnaire. The results indicated that those who were exposed to benevolent sexism described themselves as being more relation-oriented and less task-oriented, with tasks being related to academic achievement. This study included a second part, in which Dutch college women were asked to read about benevolent and hostile sexism, and then respond to a short questionnaire. The results of the second part of the study were consistent with the first. A third part of the study also provided results similar to the first two, indicating that when exposed to benevolent sexism, the participants who expected to collaborate with an individual who endorsed the sexist beliefs described themselves as less task-oriented, and were more willing to allow the males to lead the team than those who did not expect to collaborate with the benevolent sexists in the study. This study included three different parts, and lends credibility to the results because of the replication. However, it is limited to a particular geographic area, which could affect the generalizability of the results to a more diverse population.

Dumont et al. (2010) in Belgium, examined the effects of benevolent sexism and hostile sexism on college women's self-construct and autobiographical memories. They found that the participants who were exposed to benevolent sexism reported more incompetence and performed slower on tasks than those exposed to hostile sexism. The external validity of this particular study may be limited due to a sample comprised only of college students. In another study conducted in Belgium by Dardenne et al. (2007), investigators examined the ability of women from two different groups—college women and uneducated women in a government job skills program—to perform job-related skills after being presented with benevolent sexism, hostile sexism, and a neutral condition. They found that in both groups, women who were exposed to benevolent sexism performed worse on tasks than those who were exposed to hostile sexism or the neutral condition. The results of this study are likely more generalizable to the larger population due to the variance in the samples. However, the sample is limited to the country of Belgium.

Oswald, Franzoi, and Frost (2012) conducted a two-part study in which they examined the influence of benevolent sexism and hostile sexism and college women's body esteem, which includes feelings about one's weight, sexual attractiveness, and physical condition. In the first part of the study, 86 female undergraduates, and their parents completed surveys evaluating benevolent and hostile sexism as well as body esteem. The results indicated that women whose fathers endorsed benevolent sexism had better body esteem than those whose fathers did not. There were no significant correlations for hostile sexism and body esteem, and no significant correlations were found with the mother's endorsement of benevolent sexism or hostile sexism. In the second part of the study, 246 college women completed questionnaires in which



encounters with benevolent sexism, and hostile sexism were examined about body esteem. Findings indicated that experiences of benevolent sexism were related to better body esteem, while experiences with hostile sexism were related to lower body esteem. These results suggest that benevolent sexism may be beneficial in some circumstances. However, this study was conducted with college women only, and the results may not generalize to a larger more diverse population.

Hammond et al. (2014) examined the relationship between psychological entitlement, or narcissistic qualities and benevolent sexism over time in a sample of New Zealand men and women. Findings indicated that women who were highly entitled endorsed high levels of benevolent sexism, and their endorsement of benevolent sexism increased after one year. For the males in the study, there was a weak relationship between psychological entitlement and benevolent sexism, and there was no increase over time. This suggests that the women in the study likely believed that they must accept benevolent sexist stereotypes to be admired and revered, leading them to accept gender prejudice. A strong point of this study was that the sample size was quite large, with 4,421 participants. However, the results may not generalize to other populations outside of New Zealand.

In another study by Hammond and Sibley (2011) conducted in New Zealand, the association between benevolent sexism and life satisfaction was examined. The results of the study indicated that for men, benevolent sexism was directly related to life satisfaction. Those who endorsed benevolent sexism also endorsed more overall satisfaction with their lives. For the women in the study, there was an indirect relationship between benevolent sexism and life

satisfaction. When the women in the study rationalized that gender inequality was justified, benevolent sexism and life satisfaction were positively correlated.

In summary, benevolent sexist ideas may appear to be innocuous but may be even more harmful than the more recognizable hostile sexist attitudes due to the indiscernibility and subjective magnanimity with which benevolent sexism is represented (Becker & Wright, 2011; Glick & Fiske, 1996). Since benevolent sexism is viewed as chivalrous and protective, many individuals, including women may endorse benevolent sexist views without being mindful that such views embody gender prejudice and inequality (Becker, 2010; Glick & Fiske, 2001). Thus, acceptance of benevolent sexism perpetuates gender prejudice in modern cultures (Becker, 2010; Che, 2016). This could impact men and women and could be unfavorable to individuals who do not adapt to traditional gender roles (Gaunt, 2013). Some examples of the harm that can come from adopting benevolent sexist views are that benevolent sexism can have a negative influence on the way in which women perceive their bodies (Shepherd et al., 2011); benevolent sexism is related to less confidence, poorer performance on tasks, and lower self-esteem in women (Barreto et al., 2010; Dardenne et al., 2007; Dumont et al., 2010), and it might also be related to the endorsement of attitudes condoning forced sex in marriage (Duran et al., 2011). Nonetheless, there is some evidence suggesting benevolent sexist beliefs have some positive impact. Researchers found that when fathers endorse benevolent sexism, their daughters may have positive body esteem (Oswald et al., 2012). There is also some indication, according to research conducted by Hammond and Sibley (2011), that benevolent sexism may be associated with life satisfaction for men and for women who accept gender inequality.

## **Relationship Satisfaction**

Romantic relationship satisfaction is important for some reasons. It has been linked to better physical and mental health (Campbell, Sedikides, & Bosson, 1994; Woods & Denton, 2014). Rhoades et al. (2011) reported findings indicating that when individuals are not satisfied with their romantic relationships and decide to end the relationship, they may suffer from significant psychological distress and may experience a decrease in life satisfaction.

Hammond and Overall (2013a) examined romantic relationship satisfaction for men who endorsed ambivalent sexism and their perceptions of their partner's behaviors. Results were obtained by measuring hostile and benevolent sexism, the participants' perceptions of their partners' and their behaviors, and relationship quality at the beginning of the study and then measuring the same variables after one year. Results indicated that men who strongly endorsed hostile sexism reported lower relationship satisfaction, and perceived their partners' behavior to be more negative than was indicated by the partners' reports. Also, in this study, there was some evidence that for men, those who scored higher on benevolent sexism had more relationship satisfaction than those who scored higher on hostile sexism. However, this finding was not consistent with both sections of the study. In the second part of the study, after the participants had been in a relationship for a year, benevolent sexism did not predict more relationship satisfaction for the men in the study. The authors theorized that the participants in the first part of the study had a romanticized outlook on their relationships, which affected their satisfaction with their relationships.

Ramsey and Hoyt (2015) surveyed 162 women and 119 men in the United States to assess the relationship between partner-objectification, coercion, and pressure to have sex in

heterosexual relationships. They found that the men in the study who stated that they often surveyed their romantic partners' bodies were more likely to pressure or coerce their partners into having sex. Likewise, the women in the study indicated that when they felt they were being objectified by their partners, they also felt more pressure from their partners to have sex. Additionally, the women who indicated that they felt objectified by their romantic partners endorsed items suggesting that they engaged in more surveillance of their own bodies and felt more shame about their bodies. These women likewise indicated that they felt less control over their ability to decline sexual advances from their partners.

### **Benevolent Sexism and Relationship Satisfaction**

Benevolent sexist attitudes more than likely impact satisfaction in romantic relationships and this hypothesis was tested in Research Question 1 (RQ1) of this current study. One aspect of benevolent sexism is the belief that men should place women on a pedestal (Glick & Fiske, 1996, 2001; Phelan et al., 2010). According to results of a study conducted by Casad et al. (2015), this practice might be enticing for women entering relationships with men who endorse benevolent sexism. However, this could be problematic for sustained romantic relationship satisfaction because the gender inequality inherent in benevolent sexism could negatively influence interactions between romantic partners as the relationship develops. This may lead to a decrease in satisfaction in romantic relationships where individuals hold benevolent sexist attitudes after the relationship is established.

Additionally, Casad et al. (2015) found that benevolent sexism was related to reductions in relationship satisfaction and confidence for women. In their study, college women in heterosexual relationships completed questionnaires, including a measure of benevolent sexism,

6 to 12 months before their weddings. The results indicated that higher benevolent sexism predicted more undesirable relationship experiences. Moreover, results indicated that endorsement of benevolent sexism was related to depression for women, and women who favored benevolent sexism had fewer expectations that their partner would support them in educational advancements than those women who did not endorse benevolent sexism. The generalizability of this particular study could be limited due to the sample including only college women. However, it provided information about how benevolent sexist ideas might affect relationship satisfaction when problems arise in women's relationships.

Results of a study by Hammond and Overall (2013b) found that for women, benevolent sexism was related to sharper declines in romantic relationship satisfaction when difficulties arose in their relationships. In this two-part study, researchers examined diary entries of both partners of heterosexual couples, who were either married or cohabitating over a 21-day period, after they had completed questionnaires measuring sexist attitudes and relationship expectations. The second part of the study involved women who were in heterosexual romantic relationships completing similar surveys as the first study and then completing diary entries for the next 10 days. The results indicated that the women who endorsed benevolent sexist beliefs reported more dissatisfaction with their relationships when relationship problems were encountered than the women who did not endorse benevolent sexism. However, this was not the same for the men in the study. The men who favored benevolent sexism reported more relationship satisfaction. A strong point of this study is that the researchers included a follow-up after a short period. However, a longer period would likely provide more reliable information.

Results of an inquiry by Sibley and Becker (2012) further indicate that benevolent sexism impacts relationship satisfaction differently for men and women. In one recent investigation, Overall et al. (2011) conducted a study in New Zealand using a sample of 6,450 individuals. They found that men who endorsed benevolent sexism were significantly more satisfied with their romantic relationships. On the other hand, the women who favored benevolent sexism were less satisfied with their romantic relationships than those who did not endorse benevolent sexism. This study included both men and women and had a large sample size, which strengthens the generalizability of the results. However, it was limited to a particular geographic area, which may limit generalizability to other countries and cultures.

Overall et al. (2011) surveyed 91 New Zealand couples to determine whether hostile and benevolent sexism impacted conflict interactions. They discovered that hostile sexism was related to more hostility from both partners in discussions, and men who endorsed benevolent sexism were more successful in discussions with their partners. The results further indicated that when women held strong benevolent sexist views and their partners were low in benevolent sexism, the women were more hostile and less open and had less success in their discussions with their partners.

Hammond and Overall (2015) assessed the function of benevolent sexism about women's competence and access to sexual affection for men. Results of this investigation suggest that for men, approval of benevolent sexism was related to providing dependency-oriented support to their female mates. Dependency-oriented support included men making plans and offering solutions that undermined women's competency. The women in the study who endorsed benevolent sexism were more apt to offer relationship-oriented support, which was illustrated by

warmth and intimacy. This indicates that benevolent sexism perpetuates gender roles in heterosexual relationships.

Some inquiries indicate that benevolent sexism might be beneficial for some individuals in romantic relationships. In one recent study, Connelly and Heesacker (2012) tested the hypothesis that benevolent sexism could be linked to life satisfaction based on a sense of fairness of the status quo (the patriarchal society), which suggests that women and men alike might tend to favor benevolent sexism because it supports the opinion that the status quo is justified. Their study found that individuals who endorsed benevolent sexism were also supportive of the opinion that the status quo is acceptable. Also, subjects who supported the status quo indicated that they were satisfied with their lives in general. This was true for both male and female participants. One strength of this study was the inclusion of both women's and men's perspectives.

Delacollette, Dumont, Sarlet, and Dardenne (2013) examined benevolent sexism in relationship to men's prescription of warmth and their perceived status of women. In this study, a group of college men in Belgium completed surveys to determine if benevolent sexist ideals impacted their prescription of warmth and competence-related traits toward women. Their findings indicated that men who endorsed benevolent sexism were more apt to prescribe warmth to women and to perceive a benefit for themselves from women receiving this warmth.

In summary, benevolent sexism appears to be related to the perpetuation of gender roles in romantic relationships (Hammond & Overall, 2015). Some studies indicate that benevolent sexism might be related to lower relationship satisfaction for women in romantic relationships (Casad et al., 2015; Hammond & Overall, 2013b), while other results suggest that the opposite

may be true for men in romantic relationships (Hammond & Overall, 2013b; Sibley & Becker, 2012). In some research, there is a direct relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction, both negative and positive (Casad et al., 2015; Hammond & Overall, 2013b; Sibley & Becker, 2012); others, however, have found an indirect positive relationship mediated by perceived fairness of the status quo (Connelly & Heesacker, 2012). Benevolent sexism may positively impact conflicts between men and women in romantic relationships (Overall et al., 2011). Additionally, research suggested that when individuals accept the status quo, benevolent sexist ideas may increase overall satisfaction with life (Connelly & Heesacker, 2012), and benevolent sexism might be related to men's perception of warmth in women (Delacollette, 2013). Thus, it appears that there are mixed results related to the impact that benevolent sexism has on relationship satisfaction for men and women.

The studies reviewed are consistent with the chosen design of the proposed study. Some strong points of the studies reviewed in this section are that many of them included both men and women, and examined benevolent sexism and romantic relationship satisfaction in various ways. Additionally, other variables were included that could impact the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction such as (a) a sense of fairness of the status quo (Connelly & Heesacker, 2012), (b) relationship expectations, and (c) problems encountered in the relationship (Hammond & Overall, 2013b). Some weaknesses of the studies examined herein include reliance on self-report measures and populations limited to certain geographical areas. While other variables were included, they were not always assessed as potential moderators of the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction.



## **Potential Moderators of the Relationship between Benevolent Sexism and Relationship Satisfaction**

There are some demographic factors that may interact with benevolent sexism to impact its relation with relationship satisfaction. Gender could be a moderator between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction, as some research indicates that there are differences in endorsement of sexism by males and females (Connelly & Heesacker, 2012; Gervias & Hoffman, 2013). Another variable that may moderate the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction is age (de Lumas et al., 2010; Gaunt, 2012). Research indicates that there are variances in the endorsement of benevolent and hostile sexism for individuals of different ethnicities (Bermúdez et al., 2013; Hayes & Swim, 2013). Therefore, ethnicity was examined as a potential moderator for this study. Individuals who hold different religious beliefs also tend to endorse sexism in various ways (Hill et al., 2010; Maltby et al., 2010); thus, religious beliefs could moderate the correlation between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction. Likewise, individuals with varying education levels endorse sexism differently (Gaunt, 2012), and education could be a moderating factor for the relationship between relationship satisfaction and benevolent sexism. Presented next are examples of factors that could act as moderators between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction, which support these assumptions.

**Gender.** Research on ambivalent sexism indicates that there are differences in the endorsement of hostile and benevolent sexism for men and women (Connelly & Heesacker, 2012; Gervias & Hoffman, 2013). Studies conducted on ambivalent sexism consistently indicate that men tend to endorse hostile sexism more than women. However, benevolent sexism is

commonly endorsed equally by both genders (Connelly & Heesacker, 2012; Gaunt, 2012). For example, in Connelly and Heesacker's (2012) study, college students completed questionnaires, including questions to obtain demographic information and the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI). The results indicated that the male participants scored higher than women on hostile sexism, but there were no differences between male and female participants in the benevolent sexism scores. However, the results of this study may not generalize to the mainstream population, because the sample consisted only of college students (Connelly & Heesacker, 2012). Gaunt's (2012) research was conducted on a community sample of adults who identified with the Jewish faith and found that men endorsed hostile sexism more than women. However, both men and women endorsed benevolent sexism equally. The external validity of this study could have been limited to a particular culture given that only individuals of the Jewish faith were considered.

Lee et al. (2010) investigated the relationship between hostile and benevolent sexism along with romantic relationship ideals. They found differences between men and women in the way in which hostile and benevolent sexism impact ideals of romantic partners. For men, benevolent sexism predicted a desire for traditionally female partners while hostile sexism was negatively related to a desire for a warm, romantic partner. For the women in the study, benevolent sexism was associated with a desire for a warm, romantic partner.

Montanes et al. (2013) examined sexist attitudes in a group of Spanish adolescents. They found that the females in the study considered benevolent sexism to be most attractive in their male partners, while the males in the study considered ambivalent sexism to be most attractive in their female companions. This study's participant pool consisted of only adolescents who

identified themselves as Spanish. Therefore, the results may not generalize to other ethnicities and adult populations.

**Age.** There may also be differences in the endorsement of benevolent sexism and hostile sexism for individuals of various ages. Recently, de Lomas, Moya, and Glick (2010) conducted a study on the effect of age and relationship experiences for ambivalent sexist attitudes in adolescents. They found that relationship experience was correlated to an increase in hostile sexism for females and benevolent sexism for males. The authors theorized that this could be due to the adolescents' desire to appeal to romantic companions. The study's results also indicated that sexist beliefs, in general, tend to decrease with age. One limitation of this particular study is that it only used adolescents.

Gaunt (2012) found that age was related to ambivalent sexist attitudes as well. Specifically, the older participants (both male and female) in the study endorsed less hostile sexism. Their results indicated that older male participants had fewer benevolent attitudes toward men, and age was positively correlated with benevolent sexism for female participants. This particular study included individuals with a wide variety of ages (18–59). These results suggest that there are some differences in the endorsement of hostile and benevolent sexism for individuals of various ages even though gender may also play a role in the differences.

**Ethnicity.** There are differences in the endorsement of benevolent sexism and hostile sexism for individuals of various ethnic backgrounds (Bermúdez et al., 2013; Glick et al., 2000; Hayes & Swim, 2013). *Machismo* and *marianismo* are common Hispanic terms used to describe traditional gender roles (Englander, Yanez, & Barney, 2012). Some aspects of *machismo* resemble benevolent sexism in that it is characterized by paternalistic protection and idealization

of women. In one particular study, investigators found that *machismo* was related to marital satisfaction for Mexican American couples (Pardo, Weisfeld, Hill, & Slatcher, 2013).

Bermúdez et al. (2013) examined ambivalent sexism and traditional relational scripts among Hispanic adults and found that both benevolent sexism and hostile sexism were correlated with traditional ideas regarding dating and gender roles. The use of secondary data collected from university students was one drawback of this particular study. Glick et al. (2000) conducted a study across 19 nations and found that both hostile and benevolent sexism scores were predictive of gender inequality for each nation surveyed. The number of nations included in the sample strengthened the generalizability of this study. Research conducted by Hayes and Swim (2013) indicated that Asian, African, and Latina/o Americans are more likely to endorse benevolent sexism than Euro-Americans. The authors noted that this was likely due to the Asian, African, and Latina/o Americans being more accepting of traditional gender roles within the family than Euro-Americans. The use of college students, exclusively, was one limitation of this study and may affect the generalizability of the results.

Robnett, Anderson, and Hunter (2012) examined differences in the attitudes of African American, European American, and Latina college students in regards to traditional gender roles and negative stereotypes about women who identify as feminists. They found that there were differences between participants of various ethnicities. Specifically, for Latina participants, hostile sexism and hostile attitudes toward men predicted an endorsement of stereotypes of feminists and less identity with feminists. On the other hand, the African-American women in the study who endorsed hostile attitudes toward men endorsed feminist stereotypes less. For the European-American participants, benevolent prejudice was associated with less identification

with feminists, and there was no such finding for the African American and Latina participants. This study included participants from various ethnicities. However, the external validity may be affected due to the sample being only college students.

Lee et al. (2010) conducted research to examine the influence of benevolent sexism and hostile sexism on romantic relationship ideals for American and Chinese college students. They found significant relationships between benevolent and hostile sexism and relationship ideals. However, there were widespread differences in these relationships between cultures. Specifically, Americans who endorsed benevolent ideals indicated that they wanted romantic partners who fit traditional gender roles and showed warmth toward them. The Americans in the study tended to endorse less benevolent sexism than the Chinese participants, nonetheless. This study provided information about how benevolent sexism and hostile sexism may impact relationship ideals, but the generalizability to the greater population might be limited due to the population being college students.

Rosenthal, Levy, and Militano's (2014) research suggested that when people believe that cultures are evolving, their sexist attitudes tend to decrease. Results of this investigation indicated that polyculturism, which is the idea that cultures are dynamic and influence each other, was related to less ambivalent sexist beliefs. In this study, researchers examined the relationship between polyculturism and sexist attitudes toward men and women using samples of college students and community adults. They found that individuals who endorsed polyculturism were less likely to endorse attitudes related to ambivalent sexism. Therefore, it appears that the endorsement of benevolent sexism may be subject to change as cultures change.

**Religious beliefs.** A study conducted by Hill et al. (2010) indicated that religious beliefs are related to benevolent sexist ideas. Results of this study in which college students' religious fundamentalism, benevolent sexism, and hostile sexism were examined along with other variables (e.g., racism, homophobia, need for structure and cognition, preference for consistency, and fear of invalidity) suggested that individuals who strongly endorsed religious fundamentalism also strongly endorsed benevolent sexism. This suggests that benevolent sexist beliefs have an impact on religious beliefs and vice versa.

Maltby et al. (2010) examined the moderating effect of gender on the relationship between religion and sexism in a group of college students in the southwestern United States who were attending an evangelical liberal arts university. Their results indicated that for men, sexism and Christian views are positively correlated. However, the women participants in the study who scored high in Christianity did not also score high in sexist attitudes. Even though other variables were examined in these studies, both indicated that religious beliefs were positively related to sexist beliefs. However, the generalizability of the results may be limited because the samples consisted of only college students.

Gaunt's (2012) study examined the relationship between Jewish religiosity and ambivalent sexism. The results suggested that for both male and female participants, Jewish religiosity was predictive of benevolent sexist attitudes. The results also indicated that Jewish religiosity was negatively related to hostile attitudes toward both genders for men. This study included both men and women and participants of various ages. Glick et al.'s (2002) study found that Catholic religiosity was predictive of benevolent sexism but did not predict hostile

sexism in a sample of adults in Spain. The results of this study may be limited to a certain geographic area and culture.

**Education level.** Another factor that may impact ambivalent sexism is education (Gaunt, 2012; Glick & Fiske, 1996; Glick et al., 2002). For instance, Glick and Fiske (1996) found that nonstudent men who were high in benevolent sexism endorsed positive attitudes and positive feminine stereotypes about women, while the men in a sample of undergraduate students who were high in benevolent sexism did not endorse positive attitudes and stereotypes toward women. Therefore, it appeared that for the nonstudent men, benevolent sexism was positively correlated with positive attitudes toward women and positive feminine stereotypes of women. However, for the men in the student sample, benevolent sexism was not positively correlated with positive attitudes toward women and the endorsement of positive feminine stereotypes. The authors hypothesized that the reason for this could be that some of the nonstudent men were older and had more experience in relationships with women, which may have led to more positive attitudes and stereotypes. A strength of this study is that it included both student and nonstudent participants, making the results more generalizable. However, it is not clear in this particular study whether or not education level is related to sexism, or if age is the factor.

In Gaunt's (2012) study, results indicated that for men, education and benevolent sexism were negatively correlated; and for women, education and hostile sexism were negatively correlated. This indicates that educated males have less benevolent sexist attitudes toward women, while women with more education have less hostile sexist attitudes toward men. This study was correlational and does not show causation, but the sample size was quite large with 854 participants. Additionally, Glick et al. (2002) found that education level was negatively

correlated with both hostile and benevolent sexism for male and female participants, indicating that education might contribute to reducing sexist beliefs overall. This study was conducted in Spain with adults between the ages of 18 and 65, which provided a sample of adults in various age ranges. However, it was limited to a certain geographical region.

**Length of time in a relationship.** Some studies suggest that after individuals have been in a romantic relationship for a period, their sexist beliefs could have an impact on their satisfaction with the relationship (Casad et al., 2015; Hammond & Overall, 2013b). In one recent investigation, Casad et al. (2015) discovered that for women benevolent sexism was linked to depression, decreases in confidence, and less satisfaction with their relationships and confidence over a period of 6 to 12 months. This suggests that women who endorse benevolent sexism might become less satisfied with their romantic relationships after some time has been spent in the relationship.

Hammond and Overall (2013b) conducted a study in which sexist attitudes and relationship expectations were measured. They found that benevolent sexism was related to decreases in satisfaction for romantic relationships for women when they experienced complications in their relationships. Their results further implied that men who supported benevolent sexist beliefs reported greater satisfaction with their relationships than those who did not endorse benevolent sexism. These findings suggest that the length of time spent in a relationship could impact the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction.

The studies reviewed in this section suggest that gender, age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, education level, and length of time in a relationship are likely related to benevolent sexism and



relationship satisfaction. In this current study, research question two (RQ2) assessed whether or not these variables moderate the relationship between benevolent sexism and romantic relationship satisfaction for adults in romantic relationships.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

This chapter reviewed the ambivalent sexism theory, research on benevolent sexism, and research conducted on benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction. The primary objective of this chapter was to explain the ambivalence of sexism and how the subtle form of benevolent sexism could impact individuals' satisfaction in romantic relationships. Previous research has mainly focused on the dangers of benevolent sexist beliefs and the differences in the endorsement of hostile and benevolent sexism for different populations. Some investigations have examined the relationship between ambivalent sexism and satisfaction in romantic relationships but did not include possible moderating effects of all of the demographic variables proposed herein. Limitations of prior studies include that some were conducted only in certain regions or countries, some were conducted mainly using college students or adolescents, and others were conducted only with women. This current study focused more specifically on benevolent sexism and its impact on relationship satisfaction for adults in romantic relationships over time, and whether or not the demographic variables discussed in this literature review moderated the correlation between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction. Since this proposed method utilized an online survey, the participants were not limited by region, and both genders were asked to participate. Thus, the current study fills a gap in the literature by providing updated information and trends regarding benevolent sexism and relationship

satisfaction as well as the moderating effects of demographic variables on the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction.

Chapter 3 presents the study design used to test the hypotheses, instruments used, procedures, and data analyses. It also presents possible threats to the validity of this research and ethical procedures followed in the current study.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction for adult men and women in romantic relationships. Additionally, it examined the moderating effects of gender, age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, education level, and the length of time in a romantic partnership on the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction. The results of this study contribute to the existing body of research on benevolent sexism by increasing awareness of the possible negative impact of benevolent sexist beliefs on romantic relationship satisfaction.

This chapter presents the research design, which was used to examine the correlation between benevolent sexism and romantic relationship satisfaction, as well as the moderating effects of gender, age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, education level, and the length of time in a relationship on the correlation between the two main variables. A description of the research design is followed by a depiction of the instruments that were used. This chapter also includes a discussion of the procedures followed by the data analysis and hypotheses that were tested. The chapter concludes with ethical considerations for the current study.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

The design of this study was quantitative and cross-sectional in nature. It examined two main variables—benevolent sexism, which is an independent/predictor variable, and relationship satisfaction, which is the dependent/outcome variable—as well as several potential moderator variables. Multiple regression analyses were used to test the hypotheses, including the

moderating role of gender, age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, education level, and length of time in the relationship between the two main variables, benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction.

A quantitative design was found to be the most appropriate for this study because the purpose was to establish whether or not a relationship existed between the variables. This design is consistent with research designs needed to advance the knowledge in the discipline, as it allowed the researcher to quantitatively determine complex relationships among the variables. The inclusion of moderators added validity to the results (Magill, 2011). The cross-sectional design was chosen due to time constraints and limitations of the researcher to be able to conduct a longitudinal study during a doctoral program. The survey design allowed for data to be collected quickly and efficiently, and it was easier for the participants to complete a survey rather than participate in an experiment. The online survey spanned the United States and was demographically heterogeneous.

Participants in this study completed two instruments: the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI), and the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS). Permission to use these instruments was granted by the authors. Demographic information was collected, including questions to determine the gender, age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, and education level of the participants. The participants were also asked about the length of time they had been in a serious romantic relationship. This design choice is consistent with research needed to advance knowledge in the discipline in that it allowed the researcher to determine: (a) if a correlation existed between benevolent sexism and romantic relationship satisfaction, and (b) if the demographic variables of interest acted as moderators to the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction.

## **Methodology**

### **Population**

The target population consisted of adults (ages 18 to 45 years and over) living in the United States, both male and female, who had been in serious romantic relationships for at least one year. For the purpose of this study, a serious romantic relationship was defined as a committed, monogamous amorous relationship between two individuals who are dating, cohabitating, or married. Because the survey was presented online, the sample was limited to individuals with access to a computer or other device with Internet connection capabilities. However, Perrin and Duggar (2015) indicated that 84% of American adults currently use the Internet, which gave the researcher access to a rather large percentage of the population. Regarding the age groups of Internet users, younger adults (under age 65 years) have the higher percentage of usage with 96% being connected to the Internet, and 58% of adults ages 65 years and older using the Internet. Therefore, the use of an online survey method allowed access to a larger group of participants who are diverse in ages and relationship experiences.

## **Procedures**

### **Sampling Procedures**

Participation in the study was voluntary, and participants were recruited through the use of SurveyMonkey Audience, which invited individuals to serve as research participants in exchange for either small donation to charities, entries into sweepstakes, or points that could be redeemed for consumer goods. This strategy was used to reach a broader audience than could be reached locally. Only adults ages 18 years and over were considered for the study. Another inclusion criterion was that the participants had been in a serious romantic relationship, as

defined above for at least one year. SurveyMonkey was instructed to recruit participants as follows: in terms of gender (50% female and 50% male); age variations (including 25% between the ages of 18–25 years; 25% between the ages of 26–35 years; 25% between the ages of 36–45 years; and 25% over age 45 years); ethnicity (a sample representative of the U.S. population); various religious beliefs (50% members of a church, synagogue, mosque, or other religious group; 50% nonmembers); and education levels (25% some high school or high school graduate; 25% trade/technical/vocational training or some college; 25% college graduate; and 25% some postgraduate work or post-graduate degree).

The sample size was calculated considering the type of analyses used, the power and alpha levels, and the effect size recommended in the literature (Hayes, 2013; Lipsey & Wilson, 1993). An online, multiple regression calculator was used to obtain the recommended sample size (Soper, 2006). The suggested sample size for a multiple regression studies with eight predictor variables plus one, using an alpha level of .05, a power value of .80, and an estimated effect size of .15 was 122 participants. However, to ensure that there is enough power to adequately establish moderation, and given the variability of participants, the researcher chose to recruit 300 participants.

### **Data Collection**

After approval was granted by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), adult men and women from the United States who had been in a romantic relationship for at least one year were recruited online through the SurveyMonkey website. SurveyMonkey Audience consists of individuals recruited through the site to take part in surveys and provides participants per the researcher's instructions. SurveyMonkey conducts the recruitment from among their audience of

interested individuals globally. However, only adults from the United States who had been in a romantic relationship for at least one year were considered for this study.

Participants were asked to read an informed consent form included at the beginning of the survey, which explained the nature of the survey and informed them of the voluntary nature of the study. Consent was indicated when the participants clicked the next button to continue with the survey. They could click the X on the browser to exit the survey if they did not consent to participate. If they chose to participate in the survey, they were asked to answer the survey questions, which included demographic inquiries, the ASI, and the RAS. Participants exited the study after completing the questionnaires and clicking the submit button. If they decided to exit the survey before completion, there was a choice to exit without completing; their information was not included in the study. No follow-up interviews with participants were necessary for this study.

### **Instrumentation**

**ASI.** The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI) was used in this study to measure the variable, benevolent sexism, in male and female participants (see Appendix B). Glick and Fiske (1996) developed an inventory that measures overall sexism, as well as hostile and benevolent sexism: the ASI. This inventory is a 22-item questionnaire that assesses benevolent sexism and hostile sexism using a Likert scale, in which participants rate each item on a scale from 0 = *disagree strongly* to 5 = *agree strongly*. Some sample items for measuring benevolent sexism are: “Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess,” and “A good woman should be put on a pedestal by her man.” Sample items for measuring hostile sexism include: “Women are too easily offended,” and “Women seek to gain power by getting control over men” (Glick &

Fiske, 1996, p. 512). This instrument was deemed appropriate for this study, as it provided a measure of benevolent and hostile sexism. Use of this measure required permission from one of the authors (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Therefore, permission to use this instrument was obtained by this writer.

According to Glick & Fiske, (1996), overall sexism can be measured by averaging all the items together after reversing items 3, 6, 7, 13, 18, and 21. Scores may range from 0 to 5. Hostile sexism and benevolent sexism are equally weighted using this method. Both hostile and benevolent sexism can also be individually measured by averaging only the items that represent each scale. Individuals who score high on both hostile and benevolent sexism are considered to be ambivalent sexists, while those who score low on both scales are considered to be non-sexists. Participants who endorse mostly hostile sexism items and score low on the benevolent sexism scale are regarded as hostile sexist individuals, and those whose scores are high in benevolent sexism but low in hostile sexism are deemed, benevolent sexists. These items also tap into the constructs of paternalism, heterosexuality, and gender differentiation.

Glick and Fiske (1996) established convergent, discriminant, and predictive validity as well as reliability for the ASI through six studies, consisting of 2,250 male and female participants. In these studies, four other measures of sexism were used to establish the validity of the ASI: 1) the Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS), 2) the Modern Sexism Scale, 3) the Old Fashioned Sexism Scale, and 4) the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (RMA). Reliability scores ranged from .79 to .92. Factor analyses were used, which repeatedly confirmed the existence of benevolent sexism and hostile sexism and their relationships to general sexism and each other. Hostile sexism and benevolent sexism were positively correlated ( $r = .52$ ). This study also



demonstrated the differences between hostile and benevolent sexism. The study's results confirmed the predictive validity of the ASI to measure ambivalent sexist attitudes towards women.

Garaigordobil and Aliri (2013) standardized the ASI with a sample of 5,313 participants in Spain ranging in age from 14 to 70 years. They found similar results in this sample with factor analyses confirming the relationships among hostile, benevolent, and ambivalent sexism scores. The results also indicate that men scored higher than women in hostile sexism. Hayes and Swim (2013) examined the validity and reliability of the ASI subscales for benevolent and hostile sexism across four ethnic groups in the United States, including African American, Asian American, Latina/o American, and European Americans. They found overall acceptable levels of reliability for the benevolent and hostile sexism subscales with .70 and .76, respectively. However, the reliability levels were lower for African and Latina/o American participants with .67 and .62, respectively.

The ASI has been used to measure hostile and benevolent sexism in numerous studies (Brandt, 2011; Gaunt, 2012; Sibley & Becker, 2012). The ASI instrument has also been used with various populations, including individuals of different ethnicities, genders, ages, education levels, and religious beliefs (Bermudez et al., 2013; Garaigordobil & Aliri, 2013; Hayes & Swim, 2013). Therefore, the ASI was deemed an appropriate instrument for measuring benevolent sexism in this study.

**RAS.** The Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) is a brief, generic measure of relationship satisfaction (Hendrick, 1988), and was used in this study to measure the variable relationship satisfaction (see Appendix F). It included items that were rated on a five-point scale

with answer choice A, which indicates low satisfaction to answer choice E, which indicates high satisfaction. Scores were obtained by converting the letters to numbers one through five, adding up the participants scores and dividing by seven. The scores range from one to five. Examples of these items include: “How well does your partner meet your needs?” and “How good is your relationship compared to most?” (Hendrick, 1988, p. 94). This measure was deemed appropriate to assess relationship satisfaction for this study in that it is a concise measure that provided information about the participants’ general assessment of their relationships. No permission was required to use this measure (Hendrick, 1988). However, the author was contacted to request her approval for the use of this instrument in this study, and she agreed to allow the use of the RAS.

According to Hendrick (1988), the RAS has internal consistency and is significantly correlated with other measures that assess satisfaction and commitment to romantic relationships. Reliability was measured to be .86, and the RAS was highly correlated with a longer measure of relationship satisfaction—the Dyadic Adjustment Scale—with a positive correlation of .80. Furthermore, the RAS has predictive validity in predicting whether or not couples remain together or end the relationship. This predictability measure was demonstrated by 91% of couples indicating satisfaction with their relationships at the beginning of the semester remaining together, and 86% who indicated dissatisfaction with their relationships at the beginning of the semester being separated from their partners when a follow-up was conducted at the end of the semester. Relatedly, Graham et al. (2011) conducted a meta-analysis to examine the reliability and generalizability of the RAS and six other measures of relationship satisfaction. They found that the RAS had a moderate level of reliability with an average of .872 across studies.

The RAS has been widely used to assess relationship satisfaction for individuals in romantic relationships (Bodi, Mikula, & Riederer, 2010; Zurbriggen, Ramsey, & Jaworski, 2011). It has also been used with various populations, including younger individuals in dating relationships and older individuals in well-established relationships (Graham et al., 2011). Therefore, the RAS was an appropriate measure for relationship satisfaction in this study.

For this study, benevolent sexism is operationally defined as a relatively subtle, subjectively positive sexist attitude toward women, where women are viewed stereotypically in restricted feminine roles (Becker, 2010; Glick & Fiske, 1996). The score for benevolent sexism was calculated by averaging each individual's scores together. Benevolent sexism scores range from 0 to 5, with 5 representing a high level of benevolent sexism. An example item is: "Women should be cherished and protected by men" (Glick & Fiske, 1996, p. 512).

Relationship satisfaction is defined as an individual's personal overall evaluation of his or her relationship (Graham et al., 2011). The RAS was used to obtain the relationship satisfaction scores. Scores from the seven items were averaged to get each individual's score and range from 1 to 5, with 5 representing high satisfaction. An example item from the RAS is: "How much do you love your partner?" (Hendrick, 1988, p. 94).

A demographic questionnaire was used to measure the remaining variables: gender, age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, education level, and length of time in a relationship (see Appendix A). This questionnaire was estimated to take no more than 2 minutes to complete. Information gathered from this questionnaire was analyzed in the study as moderators of the relationship between the predictor variable benevolent sexism, and the outcome variable relationship satisfaction.

## Data Analyses

Data were collected from the participants' responses to the survey questions including the ASI and the RAS and was analyzed using the IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. Before the analyses, the data were checked to ensure that all responses were complete; incomplete surveys were not included in the data analyses. The surveys were screened to determine whether the participants met the age qualifications and had been in a romantic relationship for at least one year; those that did not meet the qualifications were discarded.

A correlational research design using linear regression analyses was utilized for this study because these types of analyses best answered the research questions.

The research questions and hypotheses guiding this study are:

Research Question 1: Is there a relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction for adults' romantic relationships as measured by the ASI and the RAS?

*H<sub>0</sub>1*: There is no relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction for adults' romantic relationships as measured by the ASI and the RAS.

*H<sub>a</sub>1*: There is a relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction for adults' romantic relationships as measured by the ASI and the RAS.

Research question one was answered using the Pearson correlation in SPSS, and responses from both the ASI and the RAS. This was deemed an appropriate measure for this question because the Pearson correlation measures the linear relationship between two variables, providing information about the degree and direction of the relationship (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2000). In this study, a positive relationship would indicate that when benevolent sexism increases, relationship satisfaction also increases. In contrast, a negative relationship would

indicate that participants with higher benevolent sexism scores would also have lower relationship satisfaction scores and vice versa.

Research Question 2: Are there moderating effects of gender, age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, education, and/or length of time in a romantic relationship on the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction?

*H<sub>02</sub>*: There are no moderating effects of gender age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, education, and/or length of time in a romantic relationship on the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction.

*H<sub>a2</sub>*: There are moderating effects of gender, age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, education, and/or length of time in a romantic relationship on the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction.

Moderator variables might affect the relationship between two variables by affecting the direction of the correlation, or by impacting the strength of the relationship between the two variables (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Fairchild & MacKinnon, 2009). One effect that a moderator variable can have is an enhancement of the relationship, which would mean that when the moderator variable increases, the impact of the predictor variable on the outcome variable also increases. Another effect that moderator variables can have is to reduce the effect of a predictor variable on the outcome variable, and a third effect that a moderator variable may have on the relationship between two variables is to change the direction of the relationship. For example, a positive correlation could be changed to a negative correlation (Fairchild & MacKinnon, 2009). Research Question 2 was answered using the demographic information as well as the responses from the ASI and the RAS.

Multiple regression analyses were performed using the command PROCESS (Hayes, 2013) in SPSS to determine whether these variables act as moderators to the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction. This type of analysis allowed the researcher to determine if the demographic variables had an effect on the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction, and what type of effect the variables had. Multiple regression analyses are commonly used in quantitative studies to determine the effects of moderating variables (Hayes, 2013; Hayes, Glynn, & Huges, 2012). The output produced a chart, which indicated whether the variables of interest had a significant moderating effect on the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction.

### **Possible Threats to Validity**

#### **External Validity**

Regarding the measures used in this study, the threat to validity was minimal as both the ASI and the RAS have established validity (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Graham et al., 2011; Hendrick, 1988). However, the external validity of this study could have been affected by the sampling technique. For example, since the survey was presented online, only individuals who had access to the Internet were able to participate in the study. This could have affected generalizability because a relatively small percentage of the U.S. population was not represented in the current study (Wright, 2015).

Additionally, the participants were volunteers and only represented a portion of the population who tend to volunteer to take surveys. On the other hand, this sample represented a more generalized overall sample of the population than other studies conducted with college freshmen, as it included individuals from a larger geographical area and with greater age ranges,

given that it was available online. These limitations are explained more clearly in the discussion section.

### **Internal Validity**

Another threat to validity was due to the data analysis being correlational. Correlation does not prove causation, and even when there is a correlation between two variables, there is always the chance that a third variable not mentioned in the study could be affecting the relationship between the variables being examined (Hayes & Matthes, 2009; Stanovich, 2001).

However, this current study includes analyses that determined whether several factors moderated the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction; thus, this added additional information that helped explain the relationship better. The use of multiple regression further helped to determine which variable had the most influence on the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction (Berry 1985; Hayes et al., 2012). Therefore, the threat to internal validity was minimized.

### **Construct Validity**

Construct validity is indicated when ideas or theories can be translated into actual observable and measurable constructs or concepts. Validation of constructs can be done by showing the similarity of one construct with a similar construct, or by demonstrating the difference between opposite constructs. Threats to construct validity could include lack of validation of the construct and difficulties with operational definitions (Colliver, Conlee, & Verhulst, 2012). However, studies conducted by Glick and Fiske (1996) and Hendrick (1988) indicate that the ASI and the RAS have adequate construct validity to measure the intended variables—benevolent sexism, and relationship satisfaction. The operational definitions used

for the variables, benevolent sexism, and relationship satisfaction, were based on peer-reviewed literature. Thus, the threat to construct validity was relatively low.

### **Ethical Procedures**

The nature of this study and its possible effects on the participants has been given careful consideration. The American Psychological Association (APA) code of ethics was consulted to ensure that the procedures would be ethical. In section 8.02 of the APA ethical code, it is stated that informed consent must be obtained from potential participants before they participate in the study (APA, 2010). Therefore, an informed consent form was provided to all prospective participants. This informed consent form outlined the procedures for participation in the study, confidentiality issues, voluntary nature of the study, risks, and benefits of participating in the study, as well as a way to contact the researcher with individual questions regarding the study.

It was clearly expressed that all records in this study would remain confidential and that only the researcher and her advisors would have access to those records. Potential participants were informed that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time during the process without any consequence or repercussions and that they were under no obligation to complete any part of the study in which they felt uncomfortable. To ensure participants' confidentiality, personal information that could identify the participants was not collected. To further protect participants' confidentiality, all data gathered were kept in a locked cabinet and was not shared with anyone other than the researcher's advisors. Additionally, the researcher's computer is password-protected, and accessible only by the researcher. Data collected in this study will be destroyed five years after completion of the study.



There were no physical risks or benefits for participation in the study. However, there was a possibility of emotional distress as participants became aware of subtle prejudices that could be present in their relationships. Therefore, participants were able to skip any questions that may have caused them emotional discomfort, and contact information for crisis and helplines were provided. There was also no deception used in this study. However, the scoring techniques of the ASI and the RAS were not revealed to the participants to maintain the integrity of the study, and to prevent possible biases from the participants. Approval for this research was obtained from the IRB (Approval # 09-27-023752).

### **Summary**

The methodology for this study utilized a quantitative design and was cross-sectional in nature, to examine the correlation between two main variables—benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction. Several potential moderator variables included: gender, age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, education level, and length of time in the relationship. Data were collected through the SurveyMonkey site and included participants' responses to the survey, which incorporated the ASI, the RAS, and demographic information collected from adult participants from the United States, both male, and female who had been in a romantic relationship for at least one year.

After data collection, correlation and multiple regression analyses were used to test the hypotheses. Possible threats to the validity of the results were addressed via the use of an online survey and statistical analyses, which helped to clarify the relationships among the variables of interest. Results of this study are presented next in Chapter 4.

## Chapter 4: Results

### Introduction

The purpose of this research was to examine the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction, as well as the potential moderating effects of gender, age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, education level, and time spent in a romantic relationship. These associations were assessed, using responses from SurveyMonkey Audience participants to the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI), which measures hostile and benevolent sexism; the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS), which is a measure of relationship satisfaction; and demographic questions, providing information about the remaining variables. Analyses were performed using data from these responses to answer the research questions guiding this study:

Research Question 1—Is there a relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction for adults' romantic relationships as measured by the ASI and the RAS?

*H<sub>01</sub>*: There is no relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction for adults' romantic relationships as measured by the ASI and the RAS.

*H<sub>a1</sub>*: There is a relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction for adults' romantic relationships as measured by the ASI and the RAS.

Research Question 2—Are there moderating effects of gender, age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, education, and/or length of time in a romantic relationship on the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction?

*H<sub>02</sub>*: There are no moderating effects of gender age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, education, and/or length of time in a romantic relationship on the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction.

*H<sub>a2</sub>*: There are moderating effects of gender, age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, education, and/or length of time in a romantic relationship on the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction.

The first null hypothesis stated that there is no relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction for adults in romantic relationships as measured by the ASI and the RAS. The second null hypothesis stated that there are no moderating effects of gender, age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, education, and/or length of time in a romantic relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction. These hypotheses were tested using correlational and multiple regression analyses. This section presents the method for collecting data, demographic characteristics of the participants, quantitative statistical analyses, results, and conclusions formulated from these analyses.

### **Data Collection**

Data for this study were collected using SurveyMonkey Audience, an online resource, which retains a participant pool similar to the demographic makeup of the United States' population. Using the SurveyMonkey website, this researcher sent out a link to potential participants that included an informed consent form and a survey compiled of demographic questions, the ASI, and the RAS. A pool of 300 participants age 18 and over was requested. To qualify for the study, participants had to have been in a committed romantic relationship for at least one year. A total of 466 responses were received with their initial agreement to participate.

Of these, 260 qualified for use in the study as a number of them did not complete the survey after reading the informed consent ( $n = 118$ , 25.32%), some did not answer all of the pertinent survey questions ( $n = 54$ , 12%), and some had not been in a committed romantic relationship for at least one year ( $n = 34$ , 7%). Those who did not qualify were deleted from the dataset, leaving a 44% recruitment rate. Since there were less than the desired 300 qualifying participant surveys, the power of the study may have been compromised.

### **Demographic Characteristics**

Of the 260 responses that did meet criteria for inclusion in the study, more than half (55.38%) were female, Caucasian (84.23%), and not members of a church, synagogue, mosque, or another religious group (58.30%). For education level, the highest percentage was for some college, trade, technical, or vocational training (31.54%). Participants had been in their current romantic relationship between 1 to 54 years. Table 1 details the demographic characteristics of this sample population.

Table 1

*Demographic Characteristics of the Study Sample*

Characteristics	Number	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	116	55.38
Female	144	44.62
<b>Age</b>		
18-29	51	19.62
30-44	71	27.31
45-59	94	36.15
60+	44	16.92
<b>Race</b>		
Caucasian	219	84.23
African American	10	3.85
Native American	1	.38
Asian	14	5.38
Mixed Race	5	1.92
Other	11	4.24
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Hispanic	25	9.62
Non-Hispanic	235	90.38
<b>Religious Beliefs</b>		
Member of a Religious Group	108	41.54
Not a Member of a Religious Group	152	58.46
<b>Education Level</b>		
Some High School	6	2.3
High School Graduate	31	11.92
Some College	63	24.23
Trade/Technical/Vocational Training	19	7.31
Graduated College	75	28.85
Some Graduate Work	12	4.62
Post Graduate Degree	54	20.77
<b>Length of Time</b>		
1-10 Years	138	53.07
11-20 Years	56	21.54
21-30 Years	34	13.08
31-40 Years	20	7.69
41-50 Years	10	3.85
50 + Years	2	0.77

Notably, the sample in the current study is not truly representative of the U.S. population. The United States population, according to the U.S. Census Bureau (2015), is 77.1% Caucasian, 13.3% African-American, 5.6% Asian, 1.2% Native American, and 2.6% Mixed Race; 17.6% identify their ethnicity as Hispanic. Additionally, there were a large number of participants who reported the length of time spent in a romantic relationship to be 1 to 10 years (53.07%), which could have skewed the results of the analysis for length of time as a moderator.

### **Data Screening**

The data for this study were transferred from SurveyMonkey to Windows SPSS format, which eliminated the requirement for transcription and the possibility of related errors. The ethnicity/race variable was coded using only two categories, White and non-White because of the large majority of the sample identifying as White. Religious beliefs were assessed using the scores for the question that inquired whether the participant was a member of a church, synagogue, mosque, or other religious organization. These were coded as '0' for no and '1' for yes. Missing values were replaced using Windows SPSS mean scoring.

Often, scores that deviate significantly from the mean referred to as outliers may distort the outcomes of the statistical analyses (Peng, Midi, Rana, & Fitrianto, 2016). To check for outliers in this sample of data, the z-scores in the descriptive statistics were examined. This examination revealed that there were no significant outliers in this data set.

### **Assumptions Testing**

Reliability of the benevolent sexism scale of the ASI and the RAS was confirmed by calculating a coefficient alpha for each measure; the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the

benevolent sexism scale was (.86), and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the RAS was (.93). These coefficients indicated that the internal reliability of the scales was acceptable. The reliability score for the benevolent sexism scale was also similar to reliability scores found in previous studies (Garaigordobil & Aliri, 2013; Hayes & Swim, 2013). Likewise, the RAS reliability score was similar to previous reliability scores (Graham et al., 2011).

To test for linearity of the variables, regression plots were generated, which indicated linear relationships between the predictor and criterion variables. Homoscedasticity was confirmed through analyses of scatter plots, which revealed adequate consistency within each distribution. The macro PROCESS (Hayes, 2013) for Windows SPSS assesses for multicollinearity by mean-centering the variables to ensure that the moderator variables are not perfectly linearly related (Hayes, 2013). Therefore, the possibility of multicollinearity in this study was addressed using the macro.

Normality in statistical procedures increases the validity of the study, and can be checked by examining the skewness and kurtosis of the variable scores. Skewness is a measure of the symmetry or lack of symmetry in a data set, and kurtosis allows one to see if the data distribution is heavy or light-tailed or normal (Ghasemi & Zahediasl, 2012). Tests for skewness and kurtosis for benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction in this study indicated that these variables met the assumption of normality. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

*Mean, Standard Deviation, Range, Skewness, and Kurtosis for Benevolent Sexism and Relationship Satisfaction (N=260)*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Actual Range	Potential Range	Skewness	Kurtosis
Benevolent Sexism	2.31	1.01	.09 - 4.6	0—5	-.206	-.600
Relationship Satisfaction	3.85	1.03	1 -5	1—5	-.916	.078

The overall mean scores for benevolent sexism in this study were somewhat lower than scores reported in previous studies. For example, the mean scores for benevolent sexism were 3.86 in a study conducted by Casad et al. (2015). However, the benevolent sexism mean scores in this current study are similar to those of another recent study by Delacollette et al. (2013). In this particular study, the overall mean for benevolent sexism scores was 2.48. The relationship satisfaction mean scores in the current study are similar to the mean scores found in previous research. Zubriggen et al. (2011) found results indicating that the mean scores for relationship satisfaction using the RAS were 3.86 for women, and 3.45 for men.

The mean scores for benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction were computed separately for men and women in the current study. These scores are presented next in Tables 3 and 4.



Table 3

*Mean, Standard Deviation, and Range for Benevolent Sexism and Relationship Satisfaction for Women (N = 144)*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Actual Range	Potential Range
Benevolent Sexism	2.51	1.03	.09 – 4.6	0—5
Relationship Satisfaction	3.81	1.08	1 -5	1—5

Table 4

*Mean, Standard Deviation, and Range for Benevolent Sexism and Relationship Satisfaction for Men (N = 116)*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Actual Range	Potential Range
Benevolent Sexism	2.48	.97	.36 – 4.3	0—5
Relationship Satisfaction	3.89	.98	1 -5	1—5

Results from this current study indicate that benevolent sexism scores are similar for men and women, which is consistent with previous research (Connelly & Heesacker, 2012). Relationship satisfaction scores also were not significantly different for men and women, which is consistent with results from prior studies (Zurbriggen, 2011).

### **Analyses Results**

Data analysis was conducted using Windows SPSS, version 21. The first analysis examined the correlation between the constructs—benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction—using the scores from the benevolent sexism scale of the ASI, and the average scores from the RAS. A Pearson correlation with a two-tailed test of significance was used to measure this relationship. Next, the variables of gender, age, ethnicity, religious beliefs,

education level, and length of time in a romantic relationship were examined as potential moderator variables of the correlation between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction using multiple regression analyses. Exploratory correlation and regression analyses were conducted using the scores from the hostile sexism scale and the remaining variables.

### **Alternative Hypothesis 1**

The first alternative hypothesis was that benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction would be significantly correlated for adults in romantic relationships as measured by the ASI and the RAS. To answer Research Question 1, a Pearson correlation two-tailed test of significance was run. The results indicated that the null hypothesis could not be rejected, as there was no significant correlation between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction ( $r = -.027, p = .67$ ). This represents a small, non-significant negative relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction.

### **Alternative Hypothesis 2**

Alternative hypothesis 2 stated that there are moderating effects of gender, age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, education, and/or length of time in a romantic relationship on the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction. To assess for this, the demographic variables were entered into regression analyses as moderator variables using version 2.13 of the macro PROCESS. This macro was designed to analyze variables in regression analyses with dichotomous or continuous variables, using mean-centering to interpret interactions. Model 1 of the PROCESS macro was used as this model is recommended for determining moderation (Hayes, 2013).

**Gender.** First, the variable ‘gender’ was entered into the regression model using the command PROCESS, model 1, as a binary moderator variable with the scores for relationship satisfaction as the dependent variable. Next, the scores for benevolent sexism were entered into the equation as an independent variable. The overall model was not significant  $R (.128)$ ,  $F(3, 256) = 1.38$ ,  $p = .25$ , and the analyses of the coefficients indicated that there was no significant relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction when examining gender as a moderator ( $b = -.250$ ,  $t(256) = -1.90$ ,  $p = .06$ ).

However, given that these results were trending toward significance, simple slopes for males and females were run to determine the direction of the trend. The results indicated a trend toward a negative correlation for benevolent sexism ( $b = -.141$ ,  $t(256) = -1.60$ ,  $p = .11$ ) when the dependent variable was ‘relationship satisfaction’ for female participants’ scores. For women, an increase in benevolent sexism was trending toward a decrease in relationship satisfaction. For the males in the sample, the results suggested a trend toward a positive relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction ( $b = .108$ ,  $t(256) = 1.12$ ,  $p = .26$ ). However, neither of these were even marginally significant.

Table 5

*Coefficients for Men and Women Examining Benevolent Sexism and Relationship Satisfaction (N=260)*

	<i>B</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	95% CI	<i>p</i>
Men	.11	.10	1.12	-.08 - -.30	.26
Women	.14	.09	-1.60	-.32 - .03	.11

Note: *b* = Coefficient; *t* = *t* statistic; *p* = *p*-value; CI= Confidence Intervals for Coefficients.

The trends represented above are consistent with previous research findings, which indicate that benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction are negatively correlated for women while benevolent sexism is positively correlated with relationship satisfaction for men (Sibley & Becker, 2012).

**Age.** Next, the variable 'age' was entered into the regression analysis using the command PROCESS, model 1 as a continuous moderator variable with the scores for the RAS entered as the dependent variable. Then, the scores for benevolent sexism were entered into the equation as an independent variable to determine if there was an interaction effect, which would indicate that age moderates the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction. The overall model was not significant, and there was no significant interaction for age and benevolent sexism on relationship satisfaction  $R (.108)$ ,  $F(3, 256) = 1.13$ ,  $p = .33$ , ( $b = .003$ ,  $t(256) = .837$ ,  $p = .41$ ) suggesting that age does not moderate the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction.

**Ethnicity.** Ethnicity was examined next, using two categories (White and non-White) with the scores for the RAS as the dependent variable. The scores for benevolent sexism were also entered into the equation as the independent variable to check for an interaction effect, which would indicate that ethnicity was a moderator for benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction. The overall model was not significant  $R (.115)$ ,  $F(3, 256) = 1.28$ ,  $p = .28$ , and results indicated that there was no significant interaction for ethnicity and benevolent sexism on relationship satisfaction ( $b = .236$ ,  $t(256) = 1.35$ ,  $p = .19$ ).

**Religious beliefs.** To determine whether religious beliefs moderated the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction, the scores from the question asking if

the participants were members of a religious group were used. These were entered into the regression equation using the command PROCESS, model 1 with the variable 'church' as a binary moderator variable along with the scores from the RAS as the dependent variable, and the scores from the benevolent sexism scale as a continuous independent variable. The results indicated that the overall model was not significant, and there was no significant interaction for religious beliefs and benevolent sexism on relationship satisfaction  $R (.160)$ ,  $F(3, 256) = 2.28$ ,  $p = .08$ , ( $b = .181$ ,  $t(256) = 1.43$ ,  $p = .15$ ). However, there was a significant main effect for religious beliefs predicting relationship satisfaction without including the benevolent sexism scores ( $b = .272$ ,  $t(256) = 2.09$ ,  $p = .04$ ). This suggests that having membership in a religious organization is related to greater satisfaction in relationships when benevolent sexism is left out of the equation.

**Education.** Education was analyzed as a potential moderator variable by entering the scores from the participants' answers to an inquiry regarding their education level into the regression equation as a continuous moderator variable using the command PROCESS, model 1 with the scores of the RAS as the dependent variable. The scores from the benevolent sexism scale were then entered as a continuous independent variable to check for an interaction between education and benevolent sexism on relationship satisfaction. Results indicated that the model was not significant  $R (.136)$ ,  $F(3, 256) = 1.53$ ,  $p = .21$ , and there was no significant interaction between benevolent sexism and education on relationship satisfaction ( $b = .017$ ,  $t(256) = .434$ ,  $p = .66$ ). Nonetheless, there was a marginally significant main effect for education when predicting relationship satisfaction ( $b = .083$ ,  $t(256) = 2.01$ ,  $p = .05$ ). This indicates that more

education is likely related to more satisfaction in romantic relationships, but benevolent sexism does not influence this relationship.

**Length of time.** To determine if the length of time spent in a relationship moderated the correlation between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction, the variable ‘length of time’ was entered as a continuous moderator variable into the regression equation using the command PROCESS, model 1, along with the scores for the RAS as the dependent variable. The scores for benevolent sexism were entered as the independent variable to determine if there was an interaction between the two variables on relationship satisfaction. Results indicated that the overall model was not significant,  $R (.143)$ ,  $F(3, 256) = 2.29$ ,  $p = .08$ . There was also no significant interaction between length of time spent in a relationship and benevolent sexism when predicting relationship satisfaction ( $b = .002$ ,  $t(256) = .541$ ,  $p = .59$ ). However, there was a significant main effect for length of time on relationship satisfaction ( $b = .011$ ,  $t(256) = 2.41$ ,  $p = .02$ ). This suggests that the longer individuals are in a romantic partnership, the more satisfied they are with the relationship. However, benevolent sexism does not impact this relationship.

The results of the regression analyses are reported in Table 6.

Table 6

*Table for Regression Analyses with the Moderator Variables: Gender, Age, Ethnicity, Religious Beliefs, Education, and Length of Time in the Relationship with Benevolent Sexism (N=260)*

Variable	<i>b</i>	<i>t</i>	95% CI	<i>p</i>
Gender	-.25	-1.90	-.51 - .01	.06
Age	.00	.837	.00 - .01	.41
Ethnicity	.24	1.35	-.11 - .58	.19
Religion	.18	1.43	-.07 - .43	.15
Education	.02	.434	-.06 - .09	.66
Length	.00	.541	-.01 - .01	.59

Note: *b* = Coefficient; *t* = *t* statistic; *p* = *p*-value; CI= Confidence Intervals for Coefficients.

As the table above illustrates, none of the demographic variables moderated the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction. Therefore, the null hypothesis for research question two could not be rejected. However, the results of these analyses indicated that gender was trending toward significance with a *p*-value of .06.

### **Exploratory Analyses**

Even though hostile sexism was not proposed as a variable in this study, analyses were run using hostile sexism along with the demographic variables studied to determine whether they moderate the relationship between relationship satisfaction and hostile sexism. First, the hostile sexism scale was tested for internal reliability using Cronbach's alpha, which resulted in a score of (.54). This represents a moderate level reliability and differed from reliability scores from previous studies, which were found to have a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of (.76) (Hayes &

Swim, 2013) and (.86) (Garaigordobil & Aliri, 2013). Descriptive analyses were then run for the mean, standard deviation, and range of hostile sexism scores. Also, the descriptive statistics for men and women were analyzed separately. The hostile sexism scale was analyzed for skewness and kurtosis, as well. These scores are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

*Mean, Standard Deviation, Range, Skewness, and Kurtosis for Hostile Sexism (N=260)*

Hostile Sexism	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range	Skewness	Kurtosis
Men	2.30	.66	3.55	.170	-.281
Women	2.21	.64	3.27	.496	.175
Total	2.25	.65	3.55	.345	-.103

The hostile sexism scores in this current study are not significantly different for men, and women are similar to hostile sexism scores from previous studies (Connelly & Heesacker, 2012; Delacollette et al., 2012). Also, tests for skewness and kurtosis indicated that the hostile sexism variable met the assumption of normality.

**Correlation analysis.** After computing the hostile sexism scale scores, a Pearson correlation two-tailed test of significance was performed using the average scores for hostile sexism and the average scores for the RAS. The results indicated that there was no significant correlation between hostile sexism and relationship satisfaction ( $r = -.060, p = .34$ ).

**Regression analyses.** Next, regression analyses were performed using the macro PROCESS in Windows SPSS. Hostile sexism scores were used as the independent variable, and the average scores of the RAS were used as the dependent variable, ‘relationship satisfaction’ for



this analysis. The demographic variables: gender, age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, education level, and length of time in the relationship were entered as moderator variables.

**Gender and hostile sexism.** In the first regression analysis, gender was analyzed as a binary moderator variable with the average scores of the RAS used as the dependent variable, and the average scores of the hostile sexism scale used as the independent variable. The results indicated that the overall model was significant  $R (.168)$ ,  $F(3, 256) = 2.81$ ,  $p = .04$ . There was also a significant interaction for hostile sexism and gender ( $b = .484$ ,  $t(256) = 2.46$ ,  $p = .01$ ). The model accounted for 2% of the variance in relationship satisfaction scores. This suggests that gender acts as a moderator of the relationship between hostile sexism and relationship satisfaction. Examination of the slopes indicated that for men, hostile sexism and relationship satisfaction were significantly negatively related ( $b = -.360$ ,  $t(256) = -2.75$ ,  $p = .01$ ). For women, there was no significant relationship between hostile sexism and relationship satisfaction ( $b = .446$ ,  $t(256) = .843$ ,  $p = .40$ ). This is illustrated in Table 8.

Table 8

*Coefficients for Men and Women Examining Hostile Sexism and Relationship Satisfaction (N=260)*

	<i>b</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>T</i>	95% CI	<i>p</i>
Men	-.36	.13	-2.75	-.62- -.10	.01
Women	.12	.15	.843	-.17- .41	.40

*Note:* *b* = Coefficient; *t* = *t* statistic; *p* = *p*-value; CI= Confidence Intervals for Coefficients.

**Age and hostile sexism.** The variable ‘age’ was then entered into a regression equation as a continuous moderator variable with the average RAS scores as the dependent variable, and

the average scores for hostile sexism as the independent variable. The results of this analysis indicated that the overall model was not significant  $R (.112)$ ,  $F(3, 256) = 1.12$ ,  $p = .34$ .

Likewise, there was no significant interaction for hostile sexism and age ( $b = -.001$ ,  $t(256) = -.080$ ,  $p = .94$ ). This suggests that age does not moderate the relationship between hostile sexism and relationship satisfaction.

***Ethnicity and hostile sexism.*** For the next regression analysis, race/ethnicity was analyzed as a binary moderator variable, using White and non-White scores with the average scores of the RAS used as the dependent variable, and the average scores of the hostile sexism scale as the independent variable. The results indicate that the overall model was not significant  $R (.092)$ ,  $F(3, 256) = 2.36$ ,  $p = .60$ . There was also no significant interaction for hostile sexism and race ( $b = -.019$ ,  $t(256) = -.076$ ,  $p = .94$ ), indicating that race/ethnicity does not moderate the relationship between hostile sexism and relationship satisfaction

***Religious beliefs and hostile sexism.*** To determine if religious beliefs moderated the relationship between hostile sexism and relationship satisfaction, the scores from the question asking if the participants were members of a religious group were used. These scores were entered into the regression equation using the command PROCESS as a binary moderator variable. Scores from the RAS were entered as the dependent variable, and the scores from the hostile sexism scale were entered as a continuous independent variable. The results indicated that the overall model was not significant, and there was no significant interaction for religious beliefs and hostile sexism on relationship satisfaction  $R (.132)$ ,  $F(3, 256) = .676$ ,  $p = .07$ , ( $b = -.172$ ,  $t(256) = -.835$ ,  $p = .41$ ). Thus, being a member of a religious group does not appear to moderate the correlation between hostile sexism and relationship satisfaction.

***Education and hostile sexism.*** Next, a regression analysis using the command PROCESS was run to determine whether education level moderated the relationship between hostile sexism and relationship satisfaction. The scores from the variable 'education' were entered as a continuous moderator variable with the average scores of the RAS used as the dependent variable, and the average scores of the hostile sexism scale as the independent variable. Results indicated that the overall model was not significant  $R (.133)$ ,  $F(3, 256) = 1.45$ ,  $p = .23$ . There was also no significant interaction for hostile sexism and education ( $b = .001$ ,  $t(256) = .026$ ,  $p = .98$ ), indicating that education level does not moderate the relationship between hostile sexism and relationship satisfaction.

***Length of time and hostile sexism.*** The variable 'length of time' was then entered into a regression equation as a continuous moderator variable using the command PROCESS with the average RAS scores as the dependent variable, and the average scores for hostile sexism as the independent variable. The results of this analysis indicate that the overall model was not significant  $R (.157)$ ,  $F(3, 256) = 2.36$ ,  $p = .07$ . Likewise, there was no significant interaction for hostile sexism and length of time ( $b = -.008$ ,  $t(256) = -.853$ ,  $p = .39$ ). This suggests that length of time spent in a romantic relationship does not moderate the correlation between hostile sexism and relationship satisfaction.

A summary of the findings of these exploratory analyses is provided in Table 9.

Table 9

*Table for Regression Analyses with the Moderator Variables: Gender, Age, Ethnicity, Religious Beliefs, Education, and Length of Time in the Relationship with Hostile Sexism (N=260)*

Variable	<i>b</i>	<i>t</i>	95% CI	<i>p</i>
Gender	.48	2.46	.10 - .88	.01
Age	-.00	-.080	-.02 - .02	.94
Ethnicity	.02	-.076	-.52 - .49	.94
Religion	-.17	-.835	-.58 - .23	.41
Education	.00	.026	-.13 - .14	.98
Length	-.01	-.853	-.03 - .01	.39

*Note:* *b* = Coefficient; *t* = *t* statistic; *p* = *p*-value; CI= Confidence Intervals for Coefficients.

As is illustrated in Table 9, gender was a significant moderator for the relationship between hostile sexism and relationship satisfaction. However, none of the other variables were significant moderators in these analyses.

### Summary

Based on the results of the Pearson correlation performed on the two main variables—benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction—the null hypothesis of the first research question was not rejected, as there was no significant correlation between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction. Concerning the second research question, the null hypothesis was also not rejected, as there were no significant interactions between the variables of gender, age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, education, or length of time in the relationship with benevolent

sexism when predicting relationship satisfaction. Nonetheless, there were trends indicating that for women, benevolent sexism was related to a decrease in relationship satisfaction and that having more education is related to more relationship satisfaction. There were some significant main effects suggesting that belonging to a religious organization and remaining in a relationship for a long period are associated with increased relationship satisfaction.

Additionally, exploratory analyses revealed that hostile sexism and relationship satisfaction were not significantly correlated. The variable 'gender' was found to be a significant moderator for hostile sexism and relationship satisfaction, however. Specifically, gender moderated the relationship between hostile sexism and relationship satisfaction in the current study. Endorsement of hostile sexism was related to less relationship satisfaction for men. None of the other demographic variables were found to moderate the relationship between hostile sexism and relationship satisfaction.

In Chapter 5, a brief summary of this study and an explanation of why and how the study was conducted is presented, as well as conclusions based on the results and the impact of these conclusions. Implications of this study are discussed, along with recommendations for future research.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this nonexperimental, quantitative study was to examine the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction for adults who had been in a romantic relationship for at least one year. Additionally, the researcher assessed whether the variables of gender, age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, education level, and length of time in the relationship moderated the association between the two main variables—benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction. There were two research questions guiding this study. Research question 1 asked: “Is there is a relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction for adults’ romantic relationships as measured by the ASI and the RAS?” Research question 2 asked: “Are there moderating effects of gender, age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, education, and/or length of time in a romantic relationship on the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction?”

Prior studies have found that benevolent sexism likely impacts relationship satisfaction (Casad et al., 2015; Hammond & Overall, 2013b; Sibley & Becker, 2012). In assessing whether the variables of gender, age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, education level, and length of time in the relationship moderated the relationship, it was discovered that there are studies, which suggest that the correlation between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction could be modified by gender (Connelly & Heesacker, 2012; Gervias & Hoffman, 2013). Some research indicates that age could modify the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction (de Lumas et al., 2010; Gaunt, 2012). Other studies suggest that ethnicity could have an impact on the way in which benevolent sexism affects relationship satisfaction (Bermúdez et al., 2013; Hayes & Swim, 2013). There is some research that indicates that religious beliefs could

moderate the relationship between the two main variables (Hill et al., 2010; Maltby et al., 2010). Education has also been found to be related to benevolent sexist beliefs (Gaunt, 2012; Glick et al., 2002), suggesting that one's education level could moderate the correlation between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction. There is also some evidence that time spent in a relationship could impact the relationship between benevolent sexism and satisfaction in romantic relationships (Casad et al., 2015; Hammond & Overall, 2013b). The studies listed above provided evidentiary information that supported the hypotheses of this study.

There were some demographic and methodological differences between the studies mentioned above and the current study. For example, many of the studies used only college students (Casad et al., 2015; Maltby et al., 2010), and some studies were conducted in certain geographical areas (Hammond & Overall, 2013b; Sibley & Becker, 2012). In the current study, there was a more representative sample of participants than those that included only college students. Furthermore, this current study's sample population was not limited to a certain geographic region since an online survey method was used. There were also some different measures used in the previous studies. In one study, ambivalent sexism was measured using the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory for Adolescents (de Lumas et al., 2010) instead of the ASI. Also, some of the researchers utilized different measures of relationship satisfaction, such as the Marital Satisfaction Scale (Casad et al., 2015). Therefore, these differences in sampling and methodology could account for some of the variances in the results when compared to the current study.

The results of the current study indicate that there is no significant direct correlation between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction in a national sample of 260 U.S.

participants recruited through SurveyMonkey Audience. Outcomes of this study revealed that the demographic variables did not have significant moderating effects using the standard  $p < .05$ , although gender did trend toward significance. For females, an increase in benevolent sexism appeared to be related to a decrease in relationship satisfaction, without reaching significance. None of the other variables were significant moderators for benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction.

While none of the hypotheses were supported, there were some noteworthy findings. Religious beliefs and length of time in a relationship were positively related to relationship satisfaction. There was also a marginally significant ( $p = .05$ ) positive relationship between education and relationship satisfaction, suggesting that individuals with higher levels of education are more satisfied with their relationships.

Additionally, exploratory analyses were performed using hostile sexism instead of benevolent sexism in similar analyses. Results indicated that hostile sexism and relationship satisfaction were not significantly correlated. However, regression analyses were performed using hostile sexism as the independent variable to determine if the demographic variables moderated the relationship between hostile sexism and relationship satisfaction. Results indicated that gender does indeed moderate the correlation between relationship satisfaction and hostile sexism. For the men, endorsement of hostile sexism was related to less satisfaction in romantic relationships. This was an interesting finding as previous research suggested that hostile sexism was related to less relationship satisfaction for both men and women (Sibley & Becker, 2012).



## Interpretation of Findings

### Primary Hypotheses

**Alternative Hypothesis 1.** The first alternative hypothesis was that there would be a relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction for adults who had been in romantic relationships as measured by the ASI and the RAS. According to the initial data analysis, there was no significant direct correlation between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction as measured by the ASI and the RAS, and the null hypothesis could not be rejected.

Prior research suggested that benevolent sexism is likely associated with the endurance of gender roles in romantic relationships (Hammond & Overall, 2015), and there has been a connection between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction in some studies (Casad et al., 2015; Hammond & Overall, 2013b; Sibley & Becker, 2012). According to these authors, benevolent sexism may be correlated to relationship satisfaction for individuals in romantic relationships, but the correlation differs for men and women. Women who endorse benevolent sexism tend to endorse less romantic relationship satisfaction, and men who score high in benevolent sexism often endorse more relationship satisfaction (Casad et al., 2015; Hammond & Overall, 2013b). Therefore, the results of this current study's analysis are not surprising, as both male and female participants were included in this part of the analysis, and this could have affected the correlation. Also, the mean scores for benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction were similar for the men and the women. Further examinations yielded a clearer depiction of how benevolent sexism might impact relationship satisfaction in that it demonstrated that the correlation for benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction was positive for men and negative for women.

In the current study, the demographic questions did not include inquiries as to whether the participants were in heterosexual or same-sex relationships. If there were participants in same-sex relationships, this could have affected the results of this analysis as well, given that benevolent sexism is a prejudice against women. Additional information regarding the type of relationship that the participants were in could lead to a better understanding of the results obtained in this study.

**Alternative Hypothesis 2.** Alternative hypothesis 2 stated that the demographic variables of gender, age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, education, and length of time spent in a relationship would moderate the association between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction. Analysis of the data indicated that none of the demographic variables used in this study acted as significant moderators for the correlation between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction. However, there were some marginally significant findings, which are discussed later in this section.

**Gender.** The results of this inquiry suggested that gender had no significant moderating effect on relationship satisfaction and benevolent sexism. Even though gender was not statistically significant with a  $p$ -value of .06 instead of less than .05, as is commonly preferred, it was trending toward significance. When the simple slopes were run to gain more information about the relationship, the results were not significant but indicated that for the female participants, an increase in benevolent sexism was likely related to a decrease in relationship satisfaction. For the male participants, the correlation was non-significant and positive, which indicates that an increase in benevolent sexism was likely related to an increase in relationship satisfaction. These results are consistent with results of previous studies, which found negative

correlations for benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction for women, and positive correlations for benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction for men (Hammond & Overall, 2013b; Sibley & Becker, 2012). It is possible that if the sample had been larger, the results of this analysis could have been significant. Also, another explanation could be that many the participants in this particular study could have been satisfied with the status quo, which was found in previous research to have been a factor in the relationship between romantic relationship satisfaction and benevolent sexism (Connelly & Heesacker, 2012).

*Age.* According to this study's analysis, the variable 'age' did not moderate the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction. Thus, even though some studies had indicated that an individual's age might have been related to different benevolent sexist beliefs (de Lumas et al., 2010; Gaunt, 2012), the results of the current study suggested that a person's age does not impact the correlation between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction. There was also no significant main effect for age on relationship satisfaction. Therefore, it does not appear that a person's age affects the impact that benevolent sexist beliefs might have on relationship satisfaction, and age does not appear to be a predictor of relationship satisfaction without including benevolent sexism.

*Ethnicity.* Previous research suggested that endorsement of benevolent sexism differs for Euro-Americans when compared to Asian, African, and Latina/o-Americans (Hayes & Swim, 2013). Upon examination of the variable 'ethnicity' in the current study, it was discovered that there was no significant interaction effect between ethnicity and benevolent sexism on relationship satisfaction. There was also no significant main effect for ethnicity on relationship satisfaction. This suggests that benevolent sexist ideas did not have an impact on relationship

satisfaction for individuals of different ethnicities, whether or not they endorsed benevolent sexist ideas. However, the majority of the sample identified themselves as Caucasian or White (84.23%), and the variable was analyzed as a dichotomous variable examining only White and non-White participants. This likely impacted the validity of this analysis, as even with this manipulation of the variable, the Caucasian participants formed the majority of the sample.

**Religious beliefs.** Considering the variable ‘religious beliefs’, membership in a religious organization, such as a church, synagogue, mosque, or other organized religious group was examined as a moderating factor for the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction. This variable was chosen because previous research suggested that individuals who identified as being a member of various religions also endorsed benevolent sexism (Gaunt, 2012; Maltby et al., 2010). Therefore, it was hypothesized that religion might have an impact on the correlation between relationship satisfaction. This was not the case, however. Results of this current study indicate that being a member of a religious group did not moderate the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction. An interesting finding from the current study though, is that religious beliefs appear to predict relationship satisfaction. This is an indication that those who reported being a member of a religious group also endorsed more satisfaction with their romantic relationships. Thus, it is possible that having ties to a faith-based organization is related to more satisfaction in all relationships, and leads to more fulfillment in romantic relations.

**Education.** Previous research suggested that education and benevolent sexism are related (Gaunt, 2012). However, upon examination of the variable ‘education’ as a moderator, it was discovered that there was no significant interaction when education level was examined as a

moderator for benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction. The results indicated that there was a marginally significant main effect of education level on relationship satisfaction, nonetheless. Specifically, higher education was correlated with more romantic relationship satisfaction. One explanation for this could be that individuals who have more education could have more fulfilling careers, and may be more satisfied with their overall life situations, including their romantic relationships.

*Length of time.* Upon examination of the analysis considering the length of time in the relationship as a moderator variable, it was discovered that length of time spent in the relationship did not moderate the correlation of benevolent sexism on relationship satisfaction. Some previous studies had found results, which indicated that benevolent sexism might negatively impact relationship satisfaction after some time spent in the relationship (Casad et al., 2015; Hammond & Overall, 2013b). However, the current study's results did not confirm this idea. Findings from the current study indicated that the longer one is in a serious romantic relationship, the more satisfied one is, as there was a significant positive main effect between the length of time and relationship satisfaction. It is reasonable that when relationships last longer, the individuals in the relationship are more satisfied with the union.

These results could have been skewed because the majority of the sample population reported their relationship length to be between one and ten years (53.07%). Therefore, longer relationships were not represented as well as the shorter ones. A sample of participants with the more evenly distributed length of time spent in the relationship could have produced different results for this part of the analysis.

**Hostile sexism.** Exploratory analyses were performed using the participants' hostile sexism scores to determine if hostile sexism and relationship satisfaction were related. Also, regression analyses were conducted to determine whether the demographic variables of gender, age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, education, and length of time in the relationship moderated the correlation between hostile sexism and relationship satisfaction.

There was no direct correlation found between hostile sexism and relationship satisfaction in this current study. However, the results indicated that gender moderated this correlation. For the men who endorsed hostile sexism, relationship satisfaction was decreased. This suggests that men who hold hostile sexist views are less satisfied with their romantic relationships. One reason for this could be that having hostile attitudes toward women leads to negative perceptions of their female partners' behaviors as was found in a study conducted by Hammond and Overall (2013a). Having negative perceptions of one's partner's behaviors would likely lead to conflicts in the relationship, which in turn would probably lead to less satisfaction with the relationship.

### **Results in the Context of the Ambivalent Sexism Theory**

While the results of the current study did not yield significant results about the main hypotheses, the trends represented by these results collectively with results of previous research strongly suggest that for women, benevolent sexist beliefs are related to less satisfaction in romantic relationships. For men, hostile sexist beliefs are related to less relationship satisfaction. When examining these results in the context of the ambivalent sexism theory, this finding is not surprising. According to the ambivalent sexism theory, sexism against women is ambivalent and ranges between two main types of sexism: hostile sexism and benevolent sexism. Benevolent

sexism is a more subtle form of sexism where women are revered and protected by men (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Lee et al., 2010). This type of treatment would likely be attractive to women entering into relationships. However, given that benevolent sexism is a form of prejudice against women, the presence of these attitudes in a romantic relationship likely leads to less satisfaction for women due to the inequality inherent in sexism (Hammond & Overall, 2013b). Therefore, women who subscribe to benevolent sexist views might have an unrealistic idea of what their relationships should be and become less satisfied with the relationship when they realize that it is not what they expected.

Prior research indicates that individuals, both male and female, who hold hostile sexist views are more likely to be less satisfied with their relationships (Sibley & Becker, 2012). The results of the current study, however, indicate that hostile sexism is related to less relationship satisfaction, but only for the men in the study. Possibly, the men in this study encountered more relationship problems due to their prejudiced views toward women. It is unclear as to why the results of the current study did not show that hostile sexism was related to less satisfaction in relationships for women. Perhaps, the results would have been significant if there was a larger sample whereas more conclusions could have been drawn from the results.

### **Limitations of the Study**

One limitation of this study was the use of an online survey for data collection. This method of collection limited the participant pool to only individuals who had access to the Internet and a device with which to access the Internet, thus jeopardizing the generalizability of the study. However, this limitation may have been offset due to the survey being distributed nationally, thereby increasing the geographical range of the study. Also, given that the survey

included self-report measures, there may have been some participants who did not answer truthfully, or completely consider each question before answering. Therefore, the data may not be an accurate reflection of their beliefs or their satisfaction levels related to their relationships.

Another limitation of this study is the fact that the large majority of the participants reported their ethnicity to be Caucasian or White, which likely impacted the generalizability of the study, as other ethnic groups were not equally represented in the sample population. Additionally, the current study is correlational and not an experimental study. Therefore, cause and effect cannot be determined, and it is not possible to determine if benevolent sexism causes dissatisfaction in romantic relationships for women, or if hostile sexism causes less satisfaction for men.

This study was also limited in that it was cross-sectional instead of longitudinal. This resulted in having various participants at different time spans in their relationships versus having the same participants over a period to answer questions about their sexist beliefs and their relationship satisfaction. Therefore, it cannot be determined if their beliefs changed over time, thus impacting their current relationship satisfaction scores.

Finally, statistical analyses to determine the internal reliability of the hostile sexism scale indicate that the reliability score was less than is commonly accepted as reliable in the present study. This could have impacted the results of the exploratory analyses in which hostile sexism was examined as a variable.

### **Recommendations**

One way in which the hypotheses of the current study could be examined more completely is to conduct a longitudinal study with romantic couples, in which benevolent sexism



and relationship satisfaction are assessed at the beginning of the study as well as the middle and end of the study. Also, it would add clarity to this research if a mixed-methods study were conducted, incorporating interviews of the participants at certain intervals of the study to glean more information about how benevolent sexism impacts relationship satisfaction for each partner in the relationship. Including individuals of various ethnicities is more representative of the national population would also improve the generalizability of this type of study.

Adding more information about the romantic relationships could also expand on the results of the current study. For example, if the participants identified whether their relationships were heterosexual or same-sex relationships, this could add rich information that could prove useful to clinicians who work with couples. Furthermore, if the participants provided details about the reasons for their relationship satisfaction or dissatisfaction, then different variables could be chosen as moderators for future studies.

### **Implications**

Outcomes of previous research suggest that benevolent sexist beliefs may have a negative impact on romantic relationship satisfaction for women (Hammond & Overall, 2013b; Sibley & Becker, 2012). Although results of this current study were not significant for the posited hypotheses, there were trends suggesting that the women in the study who endorsed benevolent sexism had less satisfaction in their romantic relationships as well. These results, along with previous outcomes, indicate that women who endorse benevolent sexism are more likely to experience less satisfaction in their romantic relationships. This adds to the existing knowledge of benevolent sexism and how this type of sexism can affect personal relationship interactions. Counselors who work with couples might consider this dynamic in case of conceptualizations to

gain a more in-depth understanding of the impact of sexism on relationships. This could lead to positive social change by helping individuals to become more satisfied with their romantic partnerships.

There were some significant findings in the current study aside from the main hypotheses. The results indicate that being a member of a religious organization is related to greater relationship satisfaction. This correlation should be explored further to determine the implications for social change. The results also indicated that having more education could be related to more relationship satisfaction. Further exploration into this is also recommended to gain a clearer understanding of the relationship. Additionally, the results indicated that longer time spent in a relationship is positively correlated with relationship satisfaction. Additional research on this phenomenon is also suggested to enhance our knowledge about relationships, and what factors affect satisfaction in our romantic relationships.

Regression analyses in which hostile sexism was examined as an independent variable to determine if the demographic variables moderated the relationship between hostile sexism and relationship satisfaction revealed that gender does act as a moderator. Specifically, for men, endorsement of hostile sexism was related to less romantic relationship satisfaction. This finding differed from previous research, which indicated that both men and women who endorse hostile sexism are less satisfied with their relationships (Sibley & Becker, 2012). Future research, in which quantitative information is obtained, could lead to a clearer understanding of these results.

### **Conclusion**

In this current study, a sample of ( $N = 260$ ) adult men and women in the United States completed online surveys aimed at assessing the potential relationship between their acceptance

of benevolent sexism and satisfaction in their romantic relationships. Additionally, gender, age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, education, and length of time spent in the relationship were examined as potential moderators of the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction for the participants in the study. After conducting correlation and multiple regression analyses on the data collected, it was discovered that there was no direct significant correlation between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction in the present sample. Furthermore, there were no significant findings indicating that the demographic variables mentioned above moderated the relationship between benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction. However, there are trends suggesting that gender might moderate the relationship with women who endorse benevolent sexism having less satisfaction in their romantic relationships, which is consistent with previous findings. For religious beliefs, there were some significant findings suggesting that individuals belonging to a religious group and those who had been in long-term romantic relationships were more satisfied with their relationships. The results of the current study also suggest that individuals with more education are likely more satisfied with their relationships. Finally, exploratory analyses revealed that gender does moderate the relationship between hostile sexism and relationship satisfaction. Endorsement of hostile sexism was related to less satisfaction in romantic relationships for men in the current study.

While the proposed hypotheses were not confirmed by the results of this current study, the results add to the existing body of knowledge regarding benevolent sexism and relationship satisfaction. This additional information may advance positive social change by contributing to our understanding of the impact that benevolent sexist beliefs could have on relationship satisfaction for women. Moreover, the information provided from the results of the current study

could prove useful to professionals who work with couples in that it could help them understand the impact that benevolent sexism has on relationship satisfaction. Further research is recommended, including a sample of romantic couples over time to gain a clearer understanding of how benevolent sexism might impact relationship satisfaction for both men and women.

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## Appendix A: Demographic Questions

**1. What is your gender?**

1. Male
2. Female

**2. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_****3. What is the highest level of education you have completed?**

1. Some high school
2. High school graduate
3. Some college
4. Trade/technical/vocational training
5. College graduate
6. Some postgraduate work
7. Post graduate degree

**4. What is your religious preference?**

1. An Orthodox church such as the Greek or Russian Orthodox Church
2. Mormon
3. Roman Catholic
4. Jewish
5. Christian Scientist
6. Muslim
7. Seventh-Day Adventist
8. Protestant
9. No religion/religious preference
10. Something else (please specify)

**5. Would you describe yourself as a "Born-again" or evangelical Christian?**

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't Know

**6. Do you happen to be a member of a church, synagogue, mosque, or other organized religious group?**

1. No
2. Yes

**7. Did you happen to attend church, synagogue, mosque, or some other religious worship service in the last seven days?**

1. Yes, Did attend
2. No, Did not attend

**8. Ethnicity: We want to be sure that we have spoken to a broad mix of people in your area. Are you, yourself, of Hispanic origin or descent, such as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or other Spanish background?**

1. Yes
2. No

**9. Race: What is your race?**

1. Caucasian
2. African-American
3. Asian
4. Native American
5. Mixed race
6. Other (please specify)

**10. What is your relationship status?**

1. Single/never been married
2. Married
3. Separated
4. Divorced
5. Widowed
6. In a committed serious romantic relationship, such as dating or cohabitating

**11. How long have you been in your current or last committed romantic relationship?**

## Appendix B: ASI

**THE 22-ITEM AMBIVALENT SEXISM INVENTORY*****Relationships Between Men and Women***

Below is a series of statements concerning men and women and their relationships in contemporary society. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement using the following scale: 0 = disagree strongly; 1 = disagree somewhat; 2 = disagree slightly; 3 = agree slightly; 4 = agree somewhat; 5 = agree strongly.

1. No matter how accomplished he is, a man is not truly complete as a person unless he has the love of a woman.
2. Many women are actually seeking special favors, such as hiring policies that favor them over men, under the guise of asking for "equality."
3. In a disaster, women ought not necessarily to be rescued before men.
4. Most women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist.
5. Women are too easily offended.
6. People are often truly happy in life without being romantically involved with a member of the other sex.
7. Feminists are not seeking for women to have more power than men.
8. Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess.
9. Women should be cherished and protected by men.
10. Most women fail to appreciate fully all that men do for them.
11. Women seek to gain power by getting control over men.
12. Every man ought to have a woman whom he adores.
13. Men are complete without women.
14. Women exaggerate problems they have at work.
15. Once a woman gets a man to commit to her, she usually tries to put him on a tight leash.
16. When women lose to men in a fair competition, they typically complain about being discriminated against.

17. A good woman should be set on a pedestal by her man.
18. There are actually very few women who get a kick out of teasing men by seeming sexually available and then refusing male advances.
19. Women, compared to men, tend to have a superior moral sensibility.
20. Men should be willing to sacrifice their own well-being in order to provide financially for the women in their lives.
21. Feminists are making entirely reasonable demands of men.
22. Women, as compared to men, tend to have a more refined sense of culture and good taste.

## Appendix C: RAS

## RELATIONSHIP ASSESSMENT SCALE

Please mark on the answer sheet the letter for each item, which best answers that item for you.

How well does your partner meet your needs?

A	B	C	D	E
Poorly		Average		Extremely well

In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?

A	B	C	D	E
Unsatisfied		Average		Extremely satisfied

How good is your relationship compared to most?

A	B	C	D	E
Poor		Average		Excellent

How often do you wish you hadn't gotten in this relationship?

A	B	C	D	E
Never		Average		Very often

To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?

A	B	C	D	E
Hardly at all		Average		Completely

How much do you love your partner?

A	B	C	D	E
Not much		Average		Very much

How many problems are there in your relationship?

A	B	C	D	E
Very few		Average		Very many

NOTE: Items 4 and 7 are reverse scored. A=1, B=2, C=3, D=4, E=5. You add up the items and divide by 7 to get a mean score.