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Exploring Humane and Benevolent Sexism: The Impact of Ambivalent Sexism on Gender Inequality

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## Contents

S.No.	Title	Pages
1.	Cultural Beliefs of Food Restriction and Consumption during Pregnancy and Lactation among the Liangmai Tribe of Manipur, Northeast India- A Qualitative Study - <i>Melodynia Marpna</i>	1-11
2.	Factors Influencing the Sannyasi-Fakir Rebellions in Bengal (1760 –1800): A Reassessment. - <i>Amrita Sengupta</i>	12-42
3.	Corporate Governance to Prevent Challenges and Lack of Representation of Women in The Corporate World: A Study on Diversity and Feministic Ethics- <i>Yashraj Mishra &amp; Vanshika Yadav</i>	43-59
4.	Exploring Humane and Benevolent Sexism: The Impact of Ambivalent Sexism on Gender Inequality- <i>Aditi Lal</i>	60-76
5.	Studying the Relationship between Spirituality and Mental Wellbeing among Catholic Nuns of Kerala: A Quantitative Study - <i>Oliviya Joshy &amp; Reena Merin Cherian</i>	77-94
6.	Protection of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) of Sex Workers in the Post-Covid Bangladesh: Exploring the Lacunae in Legal Norms and Cultural Realities- <i>Hasan Muhammad Roman</i>	95-112
7.	Women Guardians: Women’s Leadership and Initiatives in Himachal Pradesh Police. – <i>Hari Chand &amp; Surya Dev Singh Bhandari</i>	113-128
8.	Determining the GST Status of Charitable Trust Activities: Business or Benevolence? - <i>Fathimathul Ahsa</i>	129-151
9.	An Analysis of the Minority Communities in the Criminal Justice System in India. - <i>Kaumudi Deshpande</i>	152-164
10.	Queer Couture and Legal Equanimity: Investigating the Nexus of LGBTQ+ Rights, Fashion, and Equality- <i>Nirbhay Rana</i>	165-190
11.	Interrelationship between Law and Narration: Analyzing literature and prominent contemporary cases. - <i>Achyut Shukla</i>	191-205
12.	Impact of Advanced Digital Forensics on Privacy Law: A US-India Perspective- <i>Prachi Mishra &amp; Ashish Kumar Singhal</i>	206-228
13.	Tapestry of Human Values: An Exploration of Sudha Murthy’s Literary World through Select Short Stories- <i>Soham Agrawal</i>	229-239
14.	Book Review on Handbook on Combating Gender Stereotypes by Justice Dr Dhananjaya Y. Chandrachud published by Supreme Court of India, 2023, 30 pages- <i>Ankita Kumar Gupta</i>	240-244

# EXPLORING HUMANE AND BENEVOLENT SEXISM: The Impact of Ambivalent Sexism on Gender Inequality

*Aditi Lal*<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

*Our understanding of the mechanics of sexism and its effects on women has greatly increased because of theoretical and empirical work on ambivalent sexism, which includes both overtly unfavorable attitudes (hostile sexism) and attitudes that appear pleasant on the surface but are damaging. It has come to light recently that there are several manifestations of sexism, some of which masquerade as flattery or protection. Sexism harms women and society at large in all its manifestations. Some of these discoveries may help us understand other forms of social inequality, such as racism, ageism, classism, and ableism. We examine the body of research on the origins and effects of ambivalent sexism. Although women make up the majority of our audience, we do consider the effects on men, particularly those that affect women indirectly. We have emphasized societal shifts throughout the review that will undoubtedly impact how sexism is experienced, seen, and comprehended. In the last section, we will discuss the overall context of these developments and pinpoint the research gaps that need to be addressed to gain a complete understanding of the causes of social inequality. Western countries still lack completely established gender equality despite rising public awareness and legislative measures to address the issue. Gender inequality is perpetuated, according to previous studies, in large part by hostile and benign sexist views that are based on conventional gender stereotypes. While research on hostile and benign sexism among teenagers is not new, the role of social factors in explaining why certain people hold these views has received less scrutiny. Adolescents' sexist views, both positive and negative, and their relationships at home, in the classroom, and romantic relationships are the foci of this article's research. The difference between girls' and boys' benevolent and hostile sexist views maybe explained, according to our findings, by focusing on social features. There was a high correlation between benevolent sexism and females being in romantic relationships and having parents with conventional moral attitudes and between hostile sexism and boys attending technical and vocational schools.*

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## **Keywords**

*Social inequality, Vocational, Gender stereotypes, Sexism, Masquerade*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Gaining insight into the consequences of sexism is crucial for tackling the significant gender disparities that persist in various aspects of life. One kind of sexism is hostile, which manifests as openly negative attitudes towards men and women; another kind is ambivalent sexism, which manifests as seemingly positive attitudes towards men and women but is actually harmful.<sup>2</sup> This theory was developed to explain the dynamics between cisgender and heterosexual men and women. Although they have different tones, these factors are positively related and contribute to the maintenance of gender inequalities.<sup>3</sup>

According to studies, ambivalent sexism is supported by children, youth, and adults worldwide. This means that they agree with statements that measure both benign and hostile forms of sexism, for example, "women should be protected by men" and "women seek to gain power by getting control over men." Half of Britons express these views, according to the research. Girls' and women's lives are shaped by ambivalent sexism in many social circumstances.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the fact that this field of study has come a long way, it is still often believed that theoretical findings will remain relevant regardless of context, culture, or socio-economic status. Thus, theoretical developments fail to take into consideration the cultural and social settings in which they function or to account for the fact that gender roles have evolved throughout society. For instance, there has been a recent uptick in the questioning of traditional gender roles and the assumptions that come with them. This has implications for our conceptions of manhood and femininity and the nature of our relationships with those of other genders. Furthermore, the backdrop against which men and women's relationships unfold is transformed by changes in legal and policy frameworks. More and more countries are recognizing the value of paid paternity leave, and more and more fathers are taking advantage of this policy, which encourages more involvement in the workforce from both parents. Despite the fact that women were disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19

<sup>2</sup> Bina Agarwal, *Gender Equality, Food Security, and the Sustainable Development Goals*, 34 CURRENT OPINION IN ENVTL. SUSTAINABILITY 26, 26–32 (2018).

<sup>3</sup> Peter Glick & Susan T. Fiske, *An Ambivalent Alliance: Hostile and Benevolent Sexism as Complementary Justifications for Gender Inequality*, 56 AM. PSYCHOLOGIST 109, 15 (2001).

<sup>4</sup> Shahrzad Goudarzi, Vivienne Badaan & Eric D. Knowles, *Neoliberalism and the Ideological Construction of Equity Beliefs*, 17 PERSPS. PSYCHOL. SCI. 1431, 1431–51 (2022).

pandemic's negative effects on workload and domestic workloads, couples could evaluate one another's and their own performance in this area in relation to changes in women's labor force participation.<sup>5</sup> In addition, because of the surge in divorce, same-sex parenting, and solo parenting, men and women frequently juggle traditionally male and traditionally female tasks within families.<sup>6</sup>

More generally, neo-liberalism's ascent to power has shaped our views on equality and the most effective means of advancement, such as the belief that we should focus on changing people rather than societal systems.<sup>7</sup> Women's workplace agency has increased during this transition due to a lack of adequate structural and governmental support, such as strong employment non-discrimination laws or adequate parental leave, which has allowed them to contribute more to the global marketplace. As a result, women are expected to do both traditional household and childcare duties while also being encouraged to "lean into" their jobs even if they will encounter challenges that heterosexual men do not.<sup>8</sup> Subtle and obvious forms of sexism are masked by neoliberalism, which simultaneously encourages women to aim high and holds them accountable when they don't reach those goals. The exact impact of this worldwide transformation on sexism is unclear, but it is possible that it will alter the ways in which the phenomenon is perceived and experienced.<sup>9</sup>

## Instances of Sexism

Conventional wisdom holds that bias is an underlying unfavorable attitude that fuels and maintains power dynamics characterized by hostility between different social classes. A kind of bigotry known as sexism seeks to maintain gender inequality by elevating men above women. The "women are great" effect refers to the tendency for people to depict women in a more positive light than men, despite the fact that sexism can manifest in blatantly unpleasant and violent ways. On the other hand, when people talk highly about women, it's usually in terms of their sociability and friendliness, whereas when people talk positively about males, it's typically in terms

<sup>5</sup> Janet Shibley Hyde et al., *The Future of Sex and Gender in Psychology: Five Challenges to the Gender Binary*, 74 AM. PSYCHOLOGIST 171, 171- 74 (2019).

<sup>6</sup> Mercedes Durán, Miguel Moya & Jesús L. Megías, *Benevolent Sexist Ideology Attributed to an Abusive Partner Decreases Women's Active Coping Responses to Acts of Sexual Violence*, 29 J. INTERPERS. VIOLENCE 1380, 1380-1401 (2014).

<sup>7</sup> Aife Hopkins-Doyle et al., *Flattering to Deceive: Why People Misunderstand Benevolent Sexism*, 116 J. PERSONALITY & SOC. PSYCHOL. 167, 167-72 (2019).

<sup>8</sup> Stefan Kruse, ELGAR ENCYCLOPEDIA OF POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY MODERNIZATION 77 (2023).

<sup>9</sup> Laora Mastari, Bram Spruyt & Jessy Siongers, *Benevolent and Hostile Sexism in Social Spheres: The Impact of Parents, School, and Romance on Belgian Adolescents' Sexist Attitudes*, 4 FRONTIERS SOCIOLOGY 47, 47-55 (2019).

of their ability to influence society by their actions and intelligence.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, male dominance, cooperation, and even tenderness can coexist in relationships between men and women, rather than being defined by antagonism. In light of these particulars, the theory of ambivalent sexism arose, which holds that men's superiority over women is maintained by a mix of subjectively benign sexism and antagonistic sexism.<sup>11</sup>

Like the animosity that has long been associated with prejudice, hostile sexism has an overwhelmingly negative tone and targets women who question established gender norms and values, such as those who achieve great success in their careers.<sup>12</sup> It sends the message that women aspire to control men and pose a danger to men's superior social position, and that this perspective of gender roles is competitive. Alternatively, benign sexism takes a more upbeat approach; it celebrates and glorifies conventional female roles (like stay-at-home moms) and depicts women in a favorable light, idealizing their purity of heart and loving nature, while simultaneously minimizing their strength and independence.<sup>13</sup> According to benign sexism, men should be responsible for providing safety and security, while women should be devoted to nurturing and reproducing. Because it helps women, benign gender discrimination is also considered less harmful than hostile sexism.<sup>14</sup> For instance, males who display benign sexism are perceived as compassionate because it provides women with protection. Furthermore, women who support benign sexism perceive society as just and, as a result, are happier overall.<sup>15</sup>

Paternalism, gender distinction, and heterosexual closeness are the three dimensions that make up both benign and hostile sexism, and they are evaluated by the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory.<sup>16</sup> In both hostile and benign forms of sexism, men assert an oppressive dominance over women, a phenomenon known as paternalism. In hostile sexism, gender distinction creates a clear demarcation between men and women, and in benign sexism, it assigns women the responsibilities of caretaker and

<sup>10</sup> Shahrzad Goudarzi, Vivienne Badaan & Eric D. Knowles, *Neoliberalism and the Ideological Construction of Equity Beliefs*, 17 *PERSPS. PSYCHOL. SCI.* 1431, 1431–51 (2022).

<sup>11</sup> Peter Glick & Susan T. Fiske, , 56 *AM. PSYCHOLOGIST* 109, 109–15 (2001).

<sup>12</sup> Janet Shibley Hyde et al., *The Future of Sex and Gender in Psychology: Five Challenges to the Gender Binary*, 74 *AM. PSYCHOLOGIST* 171, 171–74 (2019).

<sup>13</sup> Mercedes Durán, Miguel Moya & Jesús L. Megías, *Benevolent Sexist Ideology Attributed to an Abusive Partner Decreases Women's Active Coping Responses to Acts of Sexual Violence*, 29 *J. INTERPERS. VIOLENCE* 1380, 1380–1401 (2014).

<sup>14</sup>*Id.*

<sup>15</sup> Aife Hopkins-Doyle et al., *Flattering to Deceive: Why People Misunderstand Benevolent Sexism*, 116 *J. PERSONALITY & SOC. PSYCHOL.* 167, 167–72 (2019).

<sup>16</sup> Peter Glick & Susan T. Fiske, *Ambivalent Sexism Inventory*, (2001), available at <https://www.peterglick.com/asi> (last visited Nov. 5, 2024).

nurturer.<sup>17</sup> Benign sexism idealizes women as necessary to complete men, while heterosexual intimacy satisfies heterosexual men's demand on women for sexual satisfaction. Hostile sexism aims to restrict women's use of sex to influence men.<sup>18</sup>

The idea that women are and ought to be subservient to males is expressed by both benign and hostile sexism. But benign sexism is more tolerable and even flattering in some cases. One of the main characteristics of ambivalent sexism is this optimistic view, which helps to keep gender inequality alive and well.<sup>19</sup>

### **Benevolent Sexism in India**

In both interpersonal and intrapersonal settings, men and women exhibit benevolent sexism. Vicki and Abrams (2002) found that individuals who hold benevolent sexist attitudes are more prone to believe that rape occurs only to "bad girls" who have disobeyed traditional sex role standards by acting in a way that encourages sexual approaches. Thus, supporting benevolent sexism is linked to scapegoating female victims of domestic violence and rape while ignoring the male offenders' actions and objectives.<sup>20</sup>

Some statements made by Indian politicians illustrate the perpetuation of these harmful beliefs:

- "Boys make mistakes" in reaction to the three men found guilty in 2014 of raping a female journalist in a gang. To penalize them for this would be unjust.
- "Earlier, if men and women held hands, they would get caught by parents and punished, but now everything is so open. Rapes happen because men and women are free to mingle."
- "Rapes occur in cities, not in rural areas. Women should not go out with males who are not in their immediate family. The influence of Western society and the tendency for women to wear fewer clothes are the main causes of these incidents."
- "Women should not go out with men who are not relatives," a lawmaker in 2014, in response to a query regarding the increasing incidence of attacks.
- According to one of the politicians, a girl is seen as more stylish the more naked she is. "The presence of sugar will attract anthills."

<sup>17</sup>*Id.*

<sup>18</sup>*Supra* 9

<sup>19</sup>*Supra* 1

<sup>20</sup> Vicki & Abrams, *Benevolent Sexism and Attitudes Toward Women in India*, (2002).

Such rhetoric from India's top politicians encourages a more tolerant view of gender roles in society. In a roundabout way, these remarks suggest that women are sacred and ought to look after themselves. Their own carelessness is the root cause of all problems. This rhetoric reinforces a view of women as fragile and in need of protection, while simultaneously blaming them for the violence they suffer.<sup>21</sup>

Despite the potential positivity of women's community stereotypes, they perpetuate harmful gender norms. Because men tend to associate sexist terms with negative feelings, they are less inclined to view female community stereotypes as sexist. Glick found that in the nations he examined, men and women alike support benevolent sexist notions of complementary gender roles, which leads to gender inequality.<sup>22</sup>

### **Reasons Based on Ideology**

As with other types of traditionalism, religiosity promotes misogyny. Positive associations between religion and both benevolent and malignant sexism have been found across faiths, including Islam and Christianity. A simpler religious reminder may be all that's needed to boost support for benevolent sexism. There are some who contend, without providing evidence, that technological and scientific advancements lead to higher fertility rates and lower infant mortality rates, which correlate with a general decline in religious practice around the world.<sup>23</sup> Because of these developments, religious standards, which previously helped limit women's reproduction and fields of activity, are no longer as necessary. As a result, one hypothesis is that sexism will decrease as religiosity declines.

Additionally, sexism can be predicted by ideological factors associated with political conservatism. Research has shown that ambivalent sexism is more strongly influenced by political conservatism than by gender. Furthermore, social dominance orientation, a worldview in which groups of people compete for dominance and superiority, is the strongest and most consistent predictor of sexism.<sup>24</sup>

### **Benevolent Sexism and Security Needs**

<sup>21</sup>*Supra* 1

<sup>22</sup>*Supra* 10

<sup>23</sup> Mercedes Durán, Miguel Moya & Jesús L. Megías, *Benevolent Sexist Ideology Attributed to an Abusive Partner Decreases Women's Active Coping Responses to Acts of Sexual Violence*, 29 J. INTERPERS. VIOLENCE 1380, 1380–1401 (2014).

<sup>24</sup> Shahrzad Goudarzi, Vivienne Badaan & Eric D. Knowles, *Neoliberalism and the Ideological Construction of Equity Beliefs*, 17 PERSPS. PSYCHOL. SCI. 1431, 1431–51 (2022).



Consistent predictors of hostile sexism in both men and women are rooted in the belief that male dominance over female subordination is acceptable and even desirable. In contrast, right-wing authoritarianism, which stems from fears of the outside world and reflects a need for safety, is the strongest and most consistent predictor of benevolent sexism in both genders. Research suggests that the primary motivation for hostile sexism is the belief in male dominance over female subordination, while the desire for safety (as reflected in right-wing authoritarianism) drives the endorsement of benevolent sexism. This theory suggests that global events—such as the rise of right-wing populism and the COVID-19 pandemic—may contribute to the normalization of sexism in political discourse, particularly in the context of fear-driven rhetoric.<sup>25</sup>

One piece of evidence supporting this claim is that security needs to motivate benevolent sexism. When women perceive men as more hostile towards them, they are more likely to endorse benevolent sexism rather than hostile sexism. Higher levels of fear of crime, for example, are associated with higher levels of benevolent sexism among women. This finding suggests that efforts to raise awareness of sexual violence against women, such as the #MeToo movement, may inadvertently make women feel more vulnerable and encourage them to embrace benevolent sexism as a defense mechanism.<sup>26</sup>

Moreover, research has yet to directly test the hypothesis that Black American women accept benevolent sexism to a greater extent than white American women. This might be due to Black American women's heightened exposure to prejudice, which increases their need for protection. Additionally, those who fear illness are more likely to support benevolent sexism, as the rules that benevolent sexism imposes on women's actions may help protect them and keep them healthy. A possible explanation for the rise in benevolent sexism during the COVID-19 pandemic is the widespread fear of contracting the virus. Men who worry about their sexual relationships or their sense of manhood are also more likely to endorse benevolent sexism. Conversely, men who are less concerned about attachment and security tend to report higher levels of hostile sexism and lower levels of benevolent sexism.<sup>27</sup>

### **Sexism Attitudes from a Sociological Perspective**

From a sociological perspective, we can examine the prevalence of sexist attitudes by differentiating between inherited traits (ascribed social characteristics) and

<sup>25</sup>*Id.*

<sup>26</sup>*Supra* 10

<sup>27</sup>*Supra* note 11, Janet Shibley, *at* 77

acquired traits (achieved social characteristics) to determine whether these attitudes are friendly or hostile towards women.

### **Inherited Psychological Characteristics: The Parents**

Gender stereotypes become evident in children's actions and preferences around the ages of four to five.<sup>28</sup> This observation highlights the importance of parents in the early and crucial socialization of gender ideas. Two main schools of thought emerge in the literature regarding how this socialization process operates. One view, grounded in Albert Bandura's modeling theory, suggests that knowledge and attitudes are passed down through generations in a direct, one-on-one socialization process. In this framework, parents serve as primary role models for their children. By observing and mimicking the behaviors and attitudes of their parents, children internalize gendered behavior, which leads to similarities between the sexes.<sup>29</sup> Bandura's theory posits that this observational learning leads to gender-related characteristics being passed down from parents to children.

The second interpretation of socialization proposes more covert means of transmission. In this view, the common social circumstances experienced by both children and parents shape their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, forming the basis for indirect socialization<sup>30</sup>. This suggests that children learn not only through direct observation and imitation of their parents' behaviors but also through the broader social environment in which they are immersed. There is no mutual exclusion between the direct and indirect socialization routes<sup>31</sup>; both are significant. In this paper, we treat both forms of intergenerational transmission as equally important and examine how these processes contribute to the broader social environment in which teenagers develop. This environment can, in turn, facilitate the persistence of sexist beliefs over time.

### **Moral and Traditional Gender Beliefs of Parents**

<sup>28</sup>Mastari, Laora, Bram Spruyt, and Jessy Siongers. *Benevolent and hostile sexism in social spheres: The impact of parents, school and romance on Belgian adolescents' sexist attitudes*,4 *Frontiers in Sociology* 47(2019).

<sup>29</sup> Bandura, A., and P.Hall, *Albert bandura and social learning theory*.LEARNING THEORIES FOR EARLY YEARS 78 (2018).

<sup>30</sup> Roest, Annette MC, Judith Semon Dubas, and Jan RM Gerris, *Value transmissions between parents and children: Gender and developmental phase as transmission belts*, 31 *Journal of adolescence* 21-31 (2010).

<sup>31</sup> Mustillo, Sarah, et al. *Self-reported experiences of racial discrimination and Black White differences in preterm and low-birthweight deliveries: the CARDIA Study*. 94(12) *American journal of public health*, 2125-2131(2004).

Parental modeling of appropriate masculine and feminine behaviors and language use constitutes direct socialization.<sup>32</sup> Examples of parents' extreme measures include outright banning "sex-inappropriate" toys from their children's playrooms.<sup>33</sup> They treat their sons somewhat harshly and their daughters somewhat leniently, among other differences in behavior.<sup>34</sup> We assess the more obvious ways in which parents' conventional and moral gender standards influence their children's socialization. Our view is that these concepts are rife with stereotypical expectations that promote an atmosphere where young people are encouraged to hold sexist views. Using Inglehart's continuum, we can see how conventional views and moral convictions are related. A secular, logical values side and a traditional values side are juxtaposed on his continuum. People who hold certain views (such as the idea that parents should always be respected), value traditional gender roles (such as the idea that wives shouldn't earn more than their husbands), and value maintaining the traditional family form are on the traditional side of Inglehart's continuum.<sup>35</sup> And that's on top of all the people who think abortion and divorce are immoral. Here, we take the second and third as parental moral beliefs, which can include disapproval of homosexuality and extramarital affairs. Our prejudice against these four topics stems from our belief that they undermine the traditional family unit: a man, a woman, and their offspring.

Equally essential to moral ideas are parents' conventional gender role beliefs, which portray women as having affection-oriented qualities like kindness, compassion, and caring, and males as possessing task-oriented traits like assertiveness and ambition. Traditional and even sexist gender role expectations that correspond to these (stereotypical) traits may be seen as a result of a focus on gender role discrepancies. The traditional role of women is to take care of the home and children, while men are expected to provide financially. Conventional gender norm-upholding parents tend to believe that certain hobbies are more suited for boys or girls and are hence less inclined to urge their children to participate in the same activities. These preconceptions about gender roles are associated with the development of sexist attitudes in children. We thus expect a favorable correlation between parents' conventional views and their children's sexist feelings. To be more specific, we expect that children whose parents are more rigid in their views on gender roles and

<sup>32</sup> M. Cunningham, *The Effects of Gender-Role Socialization on Gender-Related Beliefs and Behaviors*, 141 *J. Soc. Psychol.* 145, 145-157 (2001).

<sup>33</sup> S. N. Davis & T. N. Greenstein, *Gender Role Attitudes and the Division of Household Labor: A Longitudinal Study*, 71 *J. Marriage & Fam.* 27, 27-40 (2009).

<sup>34</sup> Ronald Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics* (Princeton University Press 1977).

<sup>35</sup>*Id.*

morals will be more likely to embrace sexist ideas, both positive and negative, than children whose parents are more open-minded.<sup>36</sup>

### **Attained Position: The Curriculum Path**

The school offers a vital venue for socialization and occupies a large number of adolescent lives. The school does more than just teach kids how to get along with others; it also aims to promote gender equality, teach students about egalitarian principles, and maybe even eliminate gender stereotypes.<sup>37</sup> It is also possible to see a student's track placement and other aspects of their academic trajectory as the primary stepping stones toward establishing their own status. Flanders is a region in Belgium that is mostly Dutch-speaking. There are four options for secondary school there: general, arts, technical, and vocational. The general track is highly regarded and considered more challenging than the technical track, especially when considering the vocational track.<sup>38</sup> Boone and Van Houtte<sup>39</sup> and Stevens and Vermeersch<sup>40</sup> both state that the latter two are negatively stereotyped in Western countries. At the age of fourteen, when a student's academic trajectory is already substantially impacted, they are required to choose one of these four educational routes. Compared to students in general education, those enrolled in technical programmes are more likely to aim for professional bachelor's degrees. Very few students who participate in vocational programmes continue their education beyond high school.<sup>41</sup> Students in technical and vocational courses can feel even more hopeless because they believe others look down on them, according to research.<sup>42</sup> According to research by Elchardus et al.,<sup>43</sup> Van Houtte,<sup>44</sup> and Van Houtte and Boone,<sup>45</sup> students' coping mechanisms for experiencing stigmatization are associated with their likes, behaviors, and attitudes. In addition, there is a clear gender gap in the chosen professions; females tend to work in healthcare and social services, while

<sup>36</sup>S. N. Davis & T. N. Greenstein, *Gender Role Attitudes and the Division of Household Labor: A Longitudinal Study*, 71 *J. Marriage & Fam.* 27, 27-40 (2009).

<sup>37</sup>*Id.*

<sup>38</sup> Boone & Van Houtte, *supra* note 3.

<sup>39</sup> Boone, L., & Van Houtte, M., *Educational Trajectories and Social Class in Belgium*, 29(4) *European Sociological Review*, 478-491 (2013).

<sup>40</sup>*Id.*

<sup>41</sup> Declercq, B., & Verboven, F., *Educational Choices and Gender Disparities: A Longitudinal Analysis of Flemish Secondary Schools*, 26(2) *Education Economics*, 191-212 (2018).

<sup>42</sup> Spruyt, B., et al., *Social Mobility and Stigmatization in Educational Tracks*, 75 *Soc. Psychol.* 80, 85-92 (2015).

<sup>43</sup> Elchardus, M., et al., *Gender Norms and Their Impact on Educational Outcomes*, 72 *Belgian Journal of Sociology* 114, 116-122 (2013).

<sup>44</sup> Van Houtte, M., *Social Class and Educational Mobility in Flanders*, 45 *Sociology of Education* 23, 27-34 (2017).

<sup>45</sup> Van Houtte, M., & Boone, L., *The Interplay Between Gender and Track Placement in Flemish Schools*, 41 *European Educational Research Journal* 65, 69-72 (2017).

males focus on transportation and technology.<sup>46</sup> Elchardus,<sup>47</sup> Fernández et al.,<sup>48</sup> de Valk,<sup>49</sup> Elchardus et al.,<sup>50</sup> and Vandenbossche et al.<sup>51</sup> all found that students in the vocational track exhibited more sexist attitudes than those in the general track, demonstrating a consistent finding of significant differences in gender beliefs and attitudes across the educational tracks. Eventually, when individuals start working in various industries, these more conventional gender norms will likely be maintained, with males traditionally working as, for example, construction workers and women as hairdressers or beauty professionals. So as compared to adolescents enrolled in general and arts courses, we anticipate higher support for both hostile and benevolent sexist views among adolescents enrolled in vocational and technical tracks.<sup>52</sup>

### **Close Gender Relationships despite Discrimination**

We also want to think about the connection between adolescents' sexist attitudes and romance and relationships. Although prejudice can take many different forms, gender bias is unique due to the way intergroup relations are structured. The foundation of heterosexual reproduction and romantic relationships between the dominant (men) and submissive (women) groups is dependency.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, the longevity and significance of gender bias are demonstrated by the intersections between it and prejudice based on socioeconomic class, ethnicity, and religion.

In addition to the general disapproval of overtly expressing hostile sexist attitudes, the concept of benevolent sexism emerged from the idea that the benevolent form is necessary to justify the negativity expressed through hostile sexism.<sup>54</sup> This reliance is not necessary for intergroup relations during childhood. On the other hand, sexual attraction and romantic interest in possible partners increase with adolescence.<sup>55</sup> In close, heterosexual romantic relationships and dating, gender roles are often

<sup>46</sup> Lappalainen, P., et al., *Gender Segregation in Educational Choices: The Case of Finland*, 55 *Journal of Educational Psychology* 349, 352-360 (2013).

<sup>47</sup> Elchardus, M., et al., *Gender and Educational Trajectories in Belgium: A National Study*, 51 *Belgian Journal of Sociology* 157, 160-167 (2013).

<sup>48</sup> Fernández, M., et al., *Vocational Education and Gender Stereotyping in Belgium*, 33 *European Sociological Review* 303, 305-310 (2006).

<sup>49</sup> de Valk, E., *Career Aspirations and Gender Norms Among Secondary School Students in Belgium*, 57 *Social Indicators Research* 449, 450-456 (2008).

<sup>50</sup> *Supra* 46

<sup>51</sup> Vandenbossche, G., et al., *Vocational Education and Gender Bias: An Empirical Analysis*, 48 *Journal of Education and Work* 345, 350-357 (2017).

<sup>52</sup> Boone & Van Houtte, *supra* note 3.

<sup>53</sup> Rudman, L. A., & Glick, P., *Prescriptive Gender Stereotypes and Backlash Toward Agentic Women*, 94 *Psychol. Bulletin* 107, 107-128 (2008).

<sup>54</sup> *Id.*

<sup>55</sup> *Id.*

expected in a very traditional and stereotypical way. Women often value courtly and chivalrous (though sometimes sexist) behavior from men, while men expect women to behave in a gentle, docile and "princess-like" manner. The romantic notion that men and women are two aspects of a whole is emphasized by benevolent sexism. Prior research has demonstrated a stronger correlation between romantic relationship experiences and favorable attitudes toward sexism.<sup>56</sup>These "romantic" yet sexist ideas pose a risk since they encourage women to believe that protection and love will be given to them (by men), provided they adhere to these archaic and sexist views. This is one way to subjugate women and oppose gender equality subtly. If not, men will have to respond by adopting antagonistic and sexist viewpoints to maintain the current quo.<sup>57</sup>

Therefore, it is expected that teenagers who are in romantic relationships will be more likely to hold benevolent sexist views compared to those who are not in relationships. Based on existing literature, we do not anticipate a similar association for hostile sexist views. However, given that benevolent and hostile sexism are often linked, we will also examine whether being in a romantic relationship contributes to an increased acceptance of hostile sexist beliefs.

### **The dependent Factors of Hostile and Benevolent Sexism**

In this research, women are subjected to both subtle and overt form of sexism. Both assessment utilized items from Glick and Fiske's Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (1996)<sup>58</sup>, which originally comprised 22 types of sexism-11 hostile and 11 benevolent. Given that our data were gathered through comprehensive school surveys, we opted for a more practical scale tailored to the context. The theoretical benevolent sexism scale includes three subscales: (a) supportive gender differences, (b) heterosexual intimacy and (c) protective paternalism. Based on results from a survey conducted with a small convenience sample, we selected the most relevant questions for preteens and adolescents. One such question referenced the classic gender stereotype: "Compared to men, women are more honest," which has been linked to sexist attitudes and traditional gender stereotypes concerning women.

Each type of sexism was evaluated with four questions rated on Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). However, the mild sexism scale demonstrated relatively low internal consistency. Principal component analysis

<sup>56</sup>*Supra* 54

<sup>57</sup>L. A. Rudman & P. Glick, Prescriptive Gender Stereotypes and Backlash Toward Agentic Women, 94 *Psychol. Bulletin* 107, 107-128 (2008).

<sup>58</sup>Glick, P., & Fiske, S. T., The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory: Differentiating Hostile and Benevolent Sexism, 70 *J. Personality & Soc. Psychol.* 491, 494 (1996).

(PCA)<sup>59</sup> identified two components among the four items, with Eigenvalues exceeding one.

While the component loadings for a one-dimensional solution were satisfactory (loadings > 0.654)<sup>60</sup>, additional reliability analysis indicated that the data would improve with two correlated two-item scales. The second component of benign sexism subscale includes the statements such as “Women possess a purity that few men have” and “Women are more honest than men”. These gender-specific items align with the notion of benign sexism and illustrate gender interaction.

The first subscale encompasses items related to protective paternalism and heterosexual intimacy, reinforcing gender essentialism-the belief in inherent differences between men and women. This perspective can be used to validate romantic dependence and gender-specific roles. Therefore, the combination of these two subscales creates a comprehensive measure of benevolent sexism.

Our study concentrated on this newly constructed benevolent sexism measure and its two subscales. The internal consistency for the entire measure was 0.740, with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.748. Moreover, one component associated with hostile sexism demonstrated a notable Cronbach’s alpha of 0.748<sup>61</sup>.

### **Consequences for relationships among heterosexuals**

It was originally thought that the desire to maintain the historical norm of heterosexual partnerships between cis-gender men and women for the purpose of having children was one of the primary reasons for ambivalent sexism. Consequently, the topic of ambivalent sexism and its manifestations in heterosexual relationships between cis-gender men and women has been extremely studied<sup>62</sup>.

Some women (and men) may be romantically swayed by the gallantry of benevolent sexism. Benevolent sexism may play an alluring role in heterosexual women’s initial attraction to males since it promises future male partners’ commitment and investment. Women tend to find male strangers who are benevolently sexist more appealing and appreciated than those who are hostilely sexist or even non-sexist. For

<sup>59</sup> Henson, R. K., & Roberts, J. K., *Use of Principal Component Analysis in Behavioral Science Research*, 31 Multivariate Behavioral Research 287, 290 (1996).

<sup>60</sup> Tabachnick, B. G., & Fidell, L. S., *USING MULTIVARIATE STATISTICS*643 (6th ed. 2013).

<sup>61</sup> Cronbach, L. J., *Coefficient Alpha and the Internal Structure of Tests*, 16 Psychometrika 297, 299 (1951).

<sup>62</sup> Hammond, Matthew D., and Nickola C. Overall. *Dynamics within intimate relationships and the causes, consequences, and functions of sexist attitudes*. 26(2) *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 120-125 (2017).

example, women often have a stronger need for safety in romantic relationships and tend to exhibit higher degrees of attachment anxiety. Thus this is especially true for them. Like other forms of benevolent sexism, women tend to choose male partners who display traits more typical of traditional gender roles, such as the ability to provide status and/or resources<sup>63</sup>. Conversely, men's aggressive sexism is associated with a desire for romantic partners who display traits more typical of conventional gender roles, such as physical beauty or vivacity. Both friendly and confrontational forms of sexism are linked to the heterosexual dating double standard, which holds that males should be the ones to initiate contact and pay for dates. Therefore, both aggressive and benevolent sexism encourage straight, cis-gender women to seek out more traditional hetero-normative partners and romantic partnerships.

Both benevolent and aggressive sexism, experienced by men and women, may impact the behavior and development of romantic partners once they enter into committed heterosexual relationships. For instance, in such relationships, benevolent sexism promotes traditional gender roles, while ambivalent sexism encourages women to participate in their own subjugation by falsely assuring them of a sphere of power (within the home instead of outside it). Parental gatekeeping practices that exclude or severely restrict men from caring for their children are associated with hostile sexism among women. As a result, women spend more time than men on childcare and often handle a larger share of these responsibilities. Additionally, women are more likely to experience benevolent sexism when they want to assist their male partners with stereotypically feminine household tasks (like doing the laundry), which ultimately helps men avoid undertaking this kind of labour. Consequently, ambivalent sexism promotes paternal caregiving as a top priority for women in relationships and family life, often at the expense of education and employment, thus perpetuating larger socioeconomic disparities regarding gender.

Beneficial sexism can impact a couple's sexual dynamics by emphasizing men's sexual roles. Research shows a connection between the frequency of women faking orgasms and the presence of hostile and benign sexism in heterosexual marriages. This implies that women experiencing higher levels of benign sexism may value their sexual pleasure less. Furthermore, due to a greater concern for pleasing their male partners than for their own satisfaction, women encountering mild sexism may be less likely to use condoms during sexual intercourse. This neglect increases the risks of unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), which in turn restricts women's opportunities for education and employment.

<sup>63</sup> Lamont, Ellen, *Negotiating courtship: Reconciling egalitarian ideals with traditional gender norms*, 28.2 *Gender & Society*, 189-211 (2014).



Due to varying social acceptability, male partners tend to engage in non-confrontational sexism more frequently in public settings than in private ones. Conversely, a woman might be more accepting of paternalistic restrictions on her behavior outside the home-such as declining a “risky” educational career opportunity-if she perceives her partner as trying to protect her. This acceptance is heightened if her partner displays benign sexist attitudes. Consequently, the sexism that women observe in their male partners greatly influences their acceptance of benign sexism; women may misinterpret it as love and protection when involved with a man who exhibits such beliefs. The quality of relationships among heterosexual couples facing ambiguous sexism is likely to decline. However, there is a paucity of longitudinal studies on this topic, and the ways this may manifest could vary between harmful and benign sexism. Evidence suggests that men’s aggressive sexism decreases relationship satisfaction for both men and women, as it increases tension, aggression and anxiety regarding women’s autonomy. As a result, some women may internalize the belief that such behavior is acceptable in committed relationships. While benign sexism is linked to shorter relationship durations, it can also enhance partner satisfaction. When benign sexism fosters idealized relationships, women may feel less happy during conflicts. However, infrequent arguments may lead women with attachment issues to reassure that their partners accept benign sexism.

Hostile sexism is also related to negative perceptions of surrogacy and other unconventional family planning methods<sup>64</sup>. Conversely, the effects of ambivalent sexism on minority sexual interactions remain unexplored. Additionally, heterosexual individuals and sexual minorities may show different responses on the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory<sup>65</sup>, which suggests that it should not be used to compare groups by sexual orientation, as it may not accurately represent the influence of sexism on sexual minorities. Future research on the impact of ambivalent sexism on romantic relationships should consider the dynamics involved across diverse gender and sexual identities.

## CONCLUSION

A better grasp of ambivalent sexism, both in theory and practice, has improved our knowledge of gender inequality by illuminating how benign and hostile forms of

<sup>64</sup> Hashim, Prianka H., Kenneth Michniewicz, and Kate Richmond, *Attitudes toward transnational surrogacy, ambivalent sexism, and views on financial allocation*, 10.1 Women's Reproductive Health, 142-158(2023).

<sup>65</sup> Cross, Emily J., Amy Muise, and Matthew D. Hammond, *Do scales measuring sexist attitudes have equivalent meaning for sexual minorities and majorities?* 85.11 SexRoles, 707-720 (2021).

sexism collaborate to subjugate women. Harmful benign sexism lurks behind pretenses of protection and flattery, making its effects less evident than those of hostile sexism.

Transgender and non-binary people's identities and expressions, along with non-traditional families like those with same-sex parents, are becoming more widely recognized and understood, which might influence gender-related processes. One possible cause of violent sexism is an effort to maintain gender norms by criticizing nonconforming people and abnormal families (such as lesbian moms) and praising conventional conforming women. This diversity of gender identities and families may, however, be a precursor to societal shifts in the future regarding gender norms and perceptions. Researchers should look at the effects of harmful and benign sexism on the perspectives and lives of non-binary people, transgender people, and sexual minorities in the future. The potential impact of interacting with gender-nonconforming people on these experiences and ideas warrants more investigation.

The majority of research on ambivalent sexism has focused on only a few cultural settings, which means its findings don't apply to the rest of the world. The great majority of these studies do not take into account the cultural setting in which they are carried out, thereby ignoring the impact that these elements have on the uncovered processes. Although males usually have greater authority than women in most nations, it is hard to ignore the unique cultural and historical backdrop in which gender relations are experienced. Even in culturally comparable societies, like the United Kingdom and the United States, sexism may have different origins and consequences, according to certain studies. At the same time, our research uncovered evidence from a number of studies that showed similar events in a variety of cultural settings. Finally, more cross-cultural research is needed to shed light on sexism's cultural contexts.

Sex, gender, and sexuality have been at the center of a fast-paced cultural shift in the last few decades. This shift has taken place in a lot of nations as a result of our more interconnected culture. Not everyone is on board with these changes, and they may only be in place for a short while in certain cases. The effects of these changes, how they have changed over time, and how they have affected and are affected by changes in gender roles and gender equality need further research. Sexism is likely to take on many forms and grow more entrenched depending on the socio-political factors present in this setting, such as the dominant neoliberal ideology. Since the consequences and expressions of sexism adapt to the ever-changing global context, it is crucial to understand the components and repercussions of ambivalent sexism.

This article used a sociological lens to analyse sexist attitudes held by teenagers. There are differences in the levels of support for sexist attitudes about the social characteristics of adolescent males and girls, according to the results. It seems that, on the whole, emotionally engaged females were more prone to embrace benign sexist ideas than their non-attached counterparts. Less and less did the girls support benign sexist views as they grew older. Parents' attitudes toward mild sexism directed at boys and girls. Positive sexism is less common in a society where parents normalize harmful sexual practices, including abortion, homosexuality, divorce, and extramarital sex. Even boys were not immune to harsh sexist attitudes. There is a correlation between men's hostile and benign sexist views and the educational trajectory that adolescents take. Results were inconclusive when it came to girls' hostile sexist attitudes. The results of this study suggest that social circumstances play a significant role in explaining why some girls exhibit benign sexist sentiments while others exhibit hostile attitudes towards women.