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TESTING A RELATIONAL-CULTURAL MODEL OF SEXISM: PERCEIVED SEXIST DISCRIMINATION, AMBIVALENT SEXISM, SELF-SILENCING, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS IN COLLEGE WOMEN

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TESTING A RELATIONAL-CULTURAL MODEL OF SEXISM: PERCEIVED SEXIST DISCRIMINATION, AMBIVALENT SEXISM, SELF-SILENCING, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS IN COLLEGE WOMEN

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

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DEDICATION

To my grandmother, Johanna “Joan” Baylink-Jones—thank you for paving the way.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined whether internalized sexism and self-silencing mediated the relationship between women's perceived experiences of sexism and psychological distress in a sample of college women. Two hundred and ninety-seven women participated in the study. These participants completed a demographic form, the Silencing the Self Scale (STSS), Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI), Outcome Questionnaire 45 (OQ45), and Schedule of Sexist Events (SSE). Path analysis conducted utilizing maximum likelihood estimation (MLE) revealed a hypothesized model that was a poor fit to the data. Psychological distress was significantly and positively predicted by lifetime sexist events, hostile sexism, and self-silencing, but not recent sexist events. Self-silencing was significantly and positively predicted by benevolent sexism. Neither lifetime nor recent sexist events predicted benevolent sexism. A respecified model was developed and demonstrated a good fit to the data. Within this model, hostile sexism, but not benevolent sexism, significantly and positively predicted self-silencing. Additionally, the indirect effect of hostile sexism on psychological distress via self-silencing was significant, providing evidence that self-silencing functioned as a partial mediator in the relationship between hostile sexism and psychological distress.

Chapter One

Overview

Counseling psychologists recognize the importance of attending to the impact of contextual and interpersonal variables on individual mental health. Research has provided empirical support for links between various forms of discrimination and psychological distress (e.g., Moradi & Subich, 2003; Pieterse & Carter, 2007; Szymanski, 2006) and, more specifically, between experiences of sexism and psychological distress (Fischer & Holz, 2007; Klonoff, Landrine, & Campbell, 2000; Landrine, Klonoff, Gibbs, Manning, & Lund, 1995; Moradi & Funderburk, 2006; Moradi & Subich, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2004; Schmitt, Branscombe, & Postmes, 2003; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, & Ferguson, 2001). Moreover, several variables have been examined as potentially relevant links between perceived sexism and psychological distress (e.g., Fischer & Holz, 2007; Moradi & Subich, 2002; 2004).

One variable proposed to contribute to the psychological distress of discrimination is the internalization of oppressive values, norms, and beliefs by marginalized individuals (e.g., Speight, 2007). Research supports that internalized oppression (e.g., heterosexism, racism, sexism) contributes to negative psychological consequences in samples of African-American women and men, lesbian and bisexual women, and gay men (Meyer, 1995; Szymanski, 2005; Szymanski & Kashubeck-West, 2008; Thomas, Witherspoon, & Speight, 2004; Wester, Vogel, Wei, & McLain, 2006). Additionally, internalized sexism predicted increased psychological distress in samples of bisexual, heterosexual, and lesbian women (Moradi & Subich, 2002; Szymanski & Kashubeck-West, 2008). Finally, research demonstrates that cultural discrimination

predicts internalized oppression (e.g., Hill & Fischer, 2008) and empirical models provide mixed support for internalized oppression as a link between experiences of discrimination and distress (e.g., Meyer, 1995; Moradi & Subich, 2002).

Ambivalent sexism theory (Glick & Fiske, 1996; 1997; 2000) contends that sexist attitudes are characterized by both negative and positive evaluations of women. Two distinct, yet interrelated, forms of sexism—hostile and "benevolent" sexism are proposed. Hostile sexism is overtly negative and represents an adversarial posture toward women who challenge men's power (e.g., feminists, career women), while benevolent sexism is subjectively positive and is characterized by feelings of affection, protection, and idealization toward women who embody conventional gender roles. Research demonstrates that women also hold ambivalently sexist attitudes toward women, and research supports that women may adopt benevolently sexist beliefs in response to environments that are hostile toward women (e.g., Glick et al., 2000; Fischer, 2006). Moreover, women who endorse benevolently sexist attitudes experience increased anxiety and fear in intimate heterosexual relationships (Yakushko, 2005).

The role of relational processes in the sexism-distress link has rarely been examined despite counseling psychology's increasing recognition of the saliency of interpersonal variables to individual psychological functioning. Research supports consistent links between relational processes and psychological health (e.g., Frey, Beesley, & Miller, 2006; Jack, 1991; Liang, et al., 2002). Moreover, a restrictive pattern of relational functioning, self-silencing, has been identified as a partial mediator between perceived sexism and psychological distress (Hurst & Beesley, 2008).

Along with other prominent relational theorists (Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1986),

Jack (1991; Jack & Dill, 1992) recognized the centrality of relationships in women's lives and proposed that women are encouraged through gender socialization processes to adopt relational schemas related to how to create and maintain intimate relationships that, in turn, can lead them to silence feelings, thoughts, and actions in important relationships. Self-silencing involves the removal of critical aspects of the self from dialogue for specific relational purposes, namely in an attempt to maintain the relationship (Jack, 1999). Empirical evidence supports that self-silencing demonstrates a consistent relationship with varying factors relevant to psychological health (e.g., Ali & Toner, 2001; Kayser, Sormanti, & Strainchamps, 1999; Piran & Cormier, 2005) and may be an important factor linking psychosocial variables and depression (e.g., Cramer, Gallant, & Langlois, 2005; Thompson, Whiffen, & Aube, 2001).

Statement of the Problem

The present study contributes to research on women's psychological health in three important ways. First, this study adds to a growing body of research examining potential links between perceived sexism and psychological distress. Such research has the potential to expand understanding of women's mental health by identifying clinically relevant processes that may ameliorate or exacerbate women's distress and ultimately inform interventions targeted to women. Second, the present study includes a variable (i.e., self-silencing) developed in the spirit of feminist-relational theories of women's development that recognizes the centrality of relationships in women's lives (e.g., Gilligan, 1982; Jack, 1991; Miller, 1986). Third, this study extends a previously tested model supporting self-silencing as a mediator of experiences of sexism and distress (Hurst & Beesley, 2008) by introducing women's internalization of sexism as a

potentially salient variable in the sexism-distress link.

The groundwork for the present study is provided by well-established bodies of research emphasizing the relation between perceived sexist events and psychological distress in addition to the role of self-silencing in women's psychological health. It is also informed by emerging research supporting internalization of sexism as a relevant process in the sexism-distress link. Moreover, the proposed model is grounded in relational-cultural theory, which offers a comprehensive framework with which to conceptualize women's experiences of discrimination (e.g., Miller, 1986; Miller & Stiver, 1997; Walker, 2004). Relational-cultural theory recognizes both the saliency and interrelatedness of sociocultural experiences and relational patterns to women's psychological well-being.

Consistent with the theoretical and empirical work reviewed, the purpose of the current study was to examine the relationship between women's perceived experiences of sexism and psychological distress. Additionally, this study investigated whether internalized sexism and self-silencing mediate the relationship between perceived sexism and distress.

Chapter Two

Review of the Literature

Theoretical Grounding

The proposed model for this project was developed utilizing the available empirical research and is grounded within a relational-cultural framework of psychological growth and development. Relational-cultural theory (RCT) offers a comprehensive framework from which to examine women's experience of distress as potentially reflective of a dynamic interplay between larger, sociocultural experiences of sexism and relational functioning.

A central tenet of RCT is that people grow through action in relationships with others (Walker, 2004). *Connection* is conceptualized as the primary vehicle for growth, while isolation or disconnection is considered the primary source of human suffering, resulting in psychological isolation and relational impairment. Deviating from conventional definitions, which often describe harmonious, warm, and pleasant interpersonal encounters, the RCT brand of connection is an active process framed within a relational context of safety, but not comfort. In fact, Miller (1986) contended that connection necessarily involves the respectful negotiation of difference that ultimately facilitates growth.

Relational-cultural theorists have identified specific processes within relationships that support connection. For example, *mutuality* in relationships is considered central to psychological growth (Miller & Stiver, 1997). Mutuality represents a "joining together in a shared experience" that creates the potential for all individuals involved to grow from the process (p. 43). It is important to note that mutuality does not equal sameness or

equality; rather, it characterizes a way of relating or a shared activity in which the individuals involved are participating as fully as possible. An absence of experienced mutuality may lead to shame, diminished self-esteem, a decreased ability to cope, and depression (Genero, Miller, Surrey, & Baldwin, 1992).

Meaningful connections also involve and promote *authenticity*, which is the increasing capacity to represent oneself more fully in relationship (Miller & Stiver, 1997; Walker, 2004). Authenticity is not a "tell-all" reaction but instead is characterized by being present and available in relationship. Relational authenticity is nurtured through growth-enhancing relationships in which resonance and response from others is experienced (Miller & Stiver). Conversely, if it has been disconnecting or dangerous to share genuine feelings and thoughts, strategies aimed at hiding these vulnerable but genuine parts of the self are often employed. Ultimately, a lack of authenticity has profound implications for one's ability to genuinely and congruently engage in relationships.

RCT purports that dominant societal messages (e.g., discrimination) exert a powerful impact on the construction of, and behavior in, relationships, particularly for members of marginalized groups (Miller, 2002). According to RCT, various forms of cultural oppression, social injustices, and internalized oppression influence marginalized individuals' expectations for relationships, particularly with members of the dominant group (Comstock et al., 2008). We live in a world that is not constructed on mutuality, and RCT contends that cultures defined by dominant-subordinate institutional structures and relationships based on gender, class, race, sexual identity, and other characteristics have created a nonmutual model that permeates all relationships (Miller & Stiver, 1997).

Additionally, the proliferation of cultural *controlling images*, a term borrowed from sociologist Patricia Hill Collins (2000), constricts relational identity and functioning. Controlling images are culturally constructed "stories" about groups and individuals that communicate how they are regarded by others and ultimately define who they are and are not within a cultural context (Miller, 2002). Although they are false, controlling images essentially function to hold people in their place and to protect and justify existing sociocultural power structures. For example, the narrow and rigid roles to which women have historically been assigned (e.g., the good mother, the temptress, the virgin, the whore) not only fail to capture the complexity of what it means to be a woman (Brabeck & Ting, 2000), but also reinforce traditional and devalued roles for women. Walker (2004) suggests that controlling images function similarly to stereotypes in that they are used to justify particular patterns or ways of relating.

According to RCT, controlling images are inextricably linked to *relational images*, or how we perceive ourselves in relation to others (Walker, 2004). Controlling images frame the world in which people form the relationships that ultimately result in the construction of relational images (Miller, 2002). These relational images, in turn, form a framework through which meaning is created, expectations are formed, and relational worth is established. Essentially, relational images, which are often carried and enacted without awareness, provide an inner working template for how one must be or what one must do in order to maintain relational connection (Miller & Stiver, 1997; Walker, 2004). Problematic or restrictive relational images, which often involve strategies aimed at keeping large parts of oneself out of the relationship, ultimately result in isolation, powerlessness, and distress (Miller & Stiver).

Sexism in Contemporary Society

Contemporary conceptualizations of sexism are no longer limited to overt or traditional forms of sexism, but rather have expanded to capture more subtle and modern variations (e.g., Glick & Fiske, 1996; Swim, Aiken, Hall, & Hunter, 1995; Tougas, Brown, Beaton, & Joly, 1995). As social policies and intergroup relations have changed in contemporary society, so too has the manner in which prejudice is manifested (Masser & Abrams, 1999; Tougas et al., 1995). Benokraitis and Feagin (1995) contended that declines in overt sexism do not necessarily equal declines in either sexist beliefs or sexist behaviors. They argued that the more traditional and overt form of sexism has been replaced with a more covert, but equally pernicious, brand.

Modern forms of sexism have been conceptualized as the denial of continuing discrimination against women, antagonism toward women's demands, and resentment toward "special favors" for women (Swim et al., 1995). Additionally, the modern expression of sexism has been modified to take into account current egalitarian values and has also been defined as a "manifestation of a conflict between egalitarian values and residual negative feelings toward women" (Tougas et al., 1995, p. 843). Finally, Glick and Fiske (1996) have posited a brand of subtle sexism (i.e., benevolent sexism) that involves feelings of protectiveness and affection toward women, but is ultimately based on women's perceived inferiority and inadequacy.

Nonetheless, the literature supports the pervasiveness of overt sexism, with women and girls reporting experiencing sexism in various forms, including discrimination, harassment, sexual assault, and physical assault (e.g., Berg, 2006; Fischer & Holz, 2007; Klonoff & Landrine, 1995; Landrine et al., 1995; Leaper & Brown, 2008;

Moradi & Subich, 2002). Leaper and Brown found that 90% of girls ages 12 through 18 reported sexual harassment, while 76% reported sexism in athletic domains and 52% in academic domains. Additionally, Klonoff and Landrine found that 99% of women in a large, diverse sample had experienced some form of sexist discrimination during their lifetimes.

Perceived Sexism and Psychological Distress

Klonoff and Landrine (1995) conceptualized sexist discrimination as multifaceted and consisting of various sexist events occurring across multiple domains of experience. Sexist events are gender-specific, negative life stressors that are akin to generic life stressors investigated in well-established lines of stress and coping research (e.g., Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). They are considered widespread in women's lives and are believed to have a greater impact on women's physical and mental health than more general life stressors because they are highly personal and target an essential quality of the self (i.e., sex) that cannot be changed (Landrine & Klonoff, 1997).

Research has provided empirical support for links between various forms of discrimination (e.g., heterosexism, racism, and sexism) and psychological distress (e.g., Moradi & Subich, 2003; Pieterse & Carter, 2007; Szymanski, 2006). Likewise, existing research supports a positive relation between perceived sexist events and psychological distress. For example, Landrine et al. (1995) reported that both recent (i.e., within the past year) and lifetime perceived sexist events were related to general psychological symptoms, obsessive-compulsivity, interpersonal sensitivity, anxiety, and premenstrual symptoms above and beyond daily hassles and general stressful life events. Additionally, in this sample of community and university women, recent sexist events were related to

depressive symptoms and lifetime sexist events were related to somatic symptoms above and beyond other generic stressful events.

Moreover, Swim et al. (2001) provided evidence for a prospective link between perceived sexism and psychological distress in a two-week diary study in a sample of undergraduate women and men. Women reported experiencing significantly more sexist events than men. These events included traditional gender role stereotypes and prejudice, demeaning and degrading comments, and sexual objectification. The number of reported sexist events predicted anger, anxiety, and social state self-esteem beyond pretest measures of negative affect, state self-esteem, feminist beliefs, and feeling threatened by the possibility of being stereotyped. Likewise, Schmitt et al. (2003) provided further evidence of a predictive link between experiences of perceived gender discrimination and psychological consequences. In their sample of undergraduate women, decreased self-esteem and negative affect were observed after exposure to a vignette and experimental condition suggesting pervasive gender discrimination. These findings support the contention that experiences of sexism contribute in a predictive manner to distress.

Klonoff et al. (2000) argued that women's experiences of sexism might explain gender differences in psychological symptom patterns. Beginning in adolescence and persisting into adulthood, girls and women report significantly higher rates of depression (e.g., Nolen-Hoeksema, 2001) and eating disorders (e.g., Hudson, Hiripi, Pope, & Kessler, 2007; Striegel-Moore & Cachelin, 2001) in addition to most forms of diagnosable mood and anxiety disorders (see Eriksen & Kress, 2008 for a review). The sociocultural experience of women, characterized by devaluing and discrimination, has been proposed as one explanation for why women demonstrate increased psychological

symptomatology characteristic of these disorders (Landrine & Klonoff, 1997).

The research seems to support this proposition. In a sample of college students, women who reported experiencing more frequent sexist events also reported higher levels of depressive, anxious, and somatic symptoms than men (Klonoff et al., 2000). However, those who reported less frequent perceived sexist events did not differ from men in psychological symptomatology. These findings support that experiences of sexism are unique from other forms of stress and may contribute to women's increased experiences of psychological distress. More recently, Dambrun (2007) empirically supported a model in which gender differences in subjective distress were mediated by perceived personal discrimination (but not group discrimination) and concluded that perceived discrimination is a key variable in explaining gender differences in mental health.

Klonoff and Landrine (1995) hypothesized that highly variable coping styles and skills (e.g., social support, personality factors) would likely mediate the negative impact of sexist events, much in the same manner as with generic life stressors. Accordingly, a more recent extension of research examining perceived sexism and psychological distress has explored potentially salient links between these variables. For example, Moradi and Subich (2002) examined lifetime and recent sexist events, feminist identity development attitudes, and distress in a sample of female university students, faculty, and staff. Frequency of perceived sexist events within the past year accounted for unique variance in psychological distress beyond that accounted for by demographic variables, social desirability, feminist identity development, and lifetime sexist events. This finding is consistent with Landrine et al.'s (1995) conceptualization of lifetime sexist events as a distal predictor and recent sexist events as a proximal predictor of women's distress.

Likewise, Hurst and Beesley (2008) found a significant sexism-distress link with self-silencing partially mediating the relationship between reported lifetime sexist events and psychological distress in a sample of college women. The mediating effect of self-silencing between sexist events occurring over a lifetime and psychological distress suggests that lifetime sexism may *set the stage* for the development of problematic relational strategies (i.e., self-silencing), which then become proximal predictors of psychological distress. Furthermore, the absence of such a mediating effect between sexist events occurring in the past year and distress may suggest a more direct link between recent sexism and psychological distress.

Additionally, Moradi and Subich (2004) reported that both the frequency and appraisal of perceived sexist events, self-esteem, and the interaction of these variables contributed to psychological distress in a sample of university women. In a similar vein, Moradi and Funderburk (2006) found a significant sexism-distress link in the context of an additional significant indirect relation between perceived social support and psychological distress, mediated through empowerment in a sample of women seeking mental health services. Finally, in a sample of undergraduate women, Fischer and Holz (2007) provided evidence for a direct effect of perceived sexist events on both depression and anxiety in addition to a partially mediated effect through group and personal self-esteem variables.

Internalized Sexism

An emerging line of research is examining the impact of internalized oppression (e.g., heterosexism, racism, sexism) on the psychological health of individuals who are members of marginalized groups. Speight (2007) argued that internalized racism may be

the most damaging psychological consequence of racism. As support, she cited Steele and Aronson's (1995) compelling findings that African Americans who were aware of stereotypes related to their intellectual inferiority demonstrated decreased performance on measures of intelligence. Likewise, results from a meta-analysis of the findings from experimental investigations of stereotype threat suggested that women and racial minority test takers performed more poorly on cognitive tests than those who were not exposed to threat (Nguyen & Ryan, 2008). Additionally, women exposed to a seemingly innocuous brand of sexism demonstrated decreased performance on cognitive tasks (Dardenne, Dumont, & Bollier, 2007). Collectively, this research supports the notion that oppressive ideologies can have an insidious impact on "objective" measures of performance.

Research also suggests that internalized oppression negatively impacts psychological health. For example, internalized racial stereotypes were negatively associated with self-esteem in a sample of African-American women (Thomas, Witherspoon, & Speight, 2004). Additionally, a racial identity attitude reflective of internalized racism (i.e., self-hatred) predicted increased psychological distress in a sample of African-American men (Wester et al., 2006). Finally, internalized heterosexism predicted increased psychological distress in a sample of gay men (Meyer, 1995) and in samples of lesbian and bisexual women (Szymanski, 2005; Szymanski & Kashubeck-West, 2008).

The impact of internalizing sexist ideologies has also been examined empirically. Internalized sexism predicted increased psychological distress in a sample of college students, faculty, and staff (Moradi & Subich, 2002). Moreover, Szymanski & Kashubeck-West (2008) found that internalized sexism, along with internalized

heterosexism, predicted psychological distress in a sample of lesbian and bisexual women.

Empirical findings provide preliminary support for internalization of cultural oppression as a link between experiences of discrimination and psychological distress. The internalization of heterosexist beliefs has been found to moderate the relationship between heterosexist experiences and psychological distress for gay men (Meyer, 1995) but not for lesbians (Szymanski, 2006). Moreover, Moradi and Subich (2002) demonstrated that the denial of sexism moderated the relationship between perceived sexist events and psychological distress, although the interaction accounted for only 1% of the variance. Although the results from these studies are certainly not conclusive, they suggest that continued examination of internalized oppression as a potentially salient link between discrimination and distress is warranted.

Finally, evidence suggests that certain variables may impact the relationship between internalized oppression and distress. For example, Szymanski and Kashubeck-West (2008) demonstrated that self-esteem and social support fully mediated the relationship between internalized heterosexism and psychological distress in lesbian and bisexual women. Moreover, social support fully mediated the relationship between internalized sexism and distress. These findings lend support to the theoretical contention (e.g., Miller & Stiver, 1997) that relational variables may be important in women's psychological experiences of discrimination.

Ambivalent Sexism

While many contemporary definitions of sexist beliefs highlight hostility or negative feelings toward women (e.g., Swim et al., 1995, Tougas et al.,1995), Glick and

Fiske (1996; 1997; 2003) contend that sexist attitudes are characterized by both negative *and* positive evaluations of women. They proposed two distinct, yet interrelated, forms of sexism—hostile and "benevolent" sexism—as complementary "legitimizing ideologies" or beliefs that justify and maintain inequality between women and men (Glick & Fiske, 2003).

Simply put, hostile sexism (HS) justifies patriarchy by denigrating women in an overtly negative manner. It is consistent with classic conceptualizations of prejudice (e.g., Allport, 1954) that highlight hostility and negativity toward the target group, as well as traditional forms of sexism that emphasize negative feelings toward, and stereotypes about, women (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Moreover, HS represents an adversarial posture toward gender relations in which women are perceived as seeking to control men through sexuality or feminist ideology (Glick & Fiske, 2000).

"Benevolent" sexism (BS), on the other hand, is a subjectively positive orientation that may be characterized by feelings of affection, protection, and even idealization toward women who embrace conventional gender roles (Glick & Fiske, 2000). While BS involves positive feelings, its motives and behaviors are ultimately predicated on a belief in women's inferior status, and its attitudes reinforce and perpetuate gender inequality.

The theory of ambivalent sexism purports that together HS and BS act as a complementary system of punishment and reward that supports a system of gender inequality (Glick & Fiske, 1999). Glick et al. (1997) contended that increasing gender equality in a modern context threatens traditional male dominance. Subsequently, HS may be directed most strongly at women who challenge men's power (e.g., feminists) and

status (e.g., career women) as well as women perceived to use sexuality to gain power over men (e.g., temptresses). While the function of HS is to punish women who do not adhere to traditional gender roles, the protection and affection of BS are offered as rewards for conforming to traditional roles.

Research supports the conceptualization that hostility is reserved for women who are considered sexually promiscuous, while benevolence is associated with sexual purity and traditional gender role conformity. For example, in a sample of college students, men expressed increased HS, but decreased BS, toward a female target presented as sexually promiscuous. At the same time, they expressed increased BS, but decreased HS, toward a female target presented as chaste and sexually pure (Sibley & Wilson, 2004). Alternatively, baseline BS attitudes among Turkish female and male participants predicted more negative attitudes toward women who engage in premarital sex (Sakalli-Urgulu & Glick, 2003).

Additionally, research suggests that hostility tends to be directed toward women in nontraditional professional roles, particularly those perceived to be more "masculine" in nature or those that threaten existing male power, while benevolence is reserved for women who conform to traditional gender roles. In a sample of college men, Glick, Diebold, Bailer-Werner, and Zhu (1997) reported that HS was correlated with negative evaluations of women in a nontraditional female subtype (i.e., "career woman"), while BS was correlated with positive evaluations of women in a traditional role (i.e., "homemaker"). Moreover, in a mixed-gender community sample, Masser and Abrams (2004) found that HS was related to both negative evaluations and lower employment recommendations for a female candidate applying for a managerial position.

Additionally, HS was associated with higher recommendation for employment for a male candidate applying for the same position. Research also supports that women and men's endorsement of HS predicts reactions to women's promotion opportunities in the workplace (Feather & Boeckmann, 2007).

Women and Ambivalent Sexism

Although the theory of ambivalent sexism was originally developed with attention to men's attitudes toward women, the literature demonstrates that women also hold hostile and benevolent attitudes toward women. Factor structures of the HS and BS subscales of the ASI are the same for women and men, suggesting that sexism toward women is culturally conveyed to men and women alike (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Glick et al., 2000). However, a substantial body of research suggests that women and men do not endorse sexism to the same degree.

Even though cross-cultural data indicate that at a national level men's level of sexism predicts women's scores on both HS and BS (Glick et al., 2000), a more comprehensive examination of gender patterns across studies suggests that women may be more likely to endorse a benevolent ideology in response to sexist hostility. In cross-cultural and U.S. mixed-gender samples, women's levels of both BS and HS have typically been lower than men's (e.g., Feather & Boeckmann, 2007; Fernandez, Castro, & Lorenzo, 2004; Glick et al.; Glick & Fiske, 1996; Masser & Abrams, 1999). However, the gender difference between scores on BS has consistently been smaller (e.g., Campbell, Schellenberg, & Senn 1997; Masser & Abrams). In their cross-cultural study, Glick et al. found that women across 19 nations were more likely to endorse BS than HS, particularly in countries with higher levels of general sexism, which were determined

utilizing United Nations indices of gender equality. In fact, in four nations with the highest mean sexism scores (i.e., Botswana, Cuba, Nigeria, and South Africa), women endorsed BS significantly more than men did. The authors posited that women, relative to men, accepted BS more than HS as a "self-defense" response in cultures characterized by high levels of sexism. Consistent with Glick et al., Yakushko (2005) found that in Ukraine, a country characterized as experiencing "aggressive remasculization" in its recent transition from socialism to capitalism, women endorsed BS at levels significantly higher than men. In the face of increased hostility from the dominant group, it is not surprising that women adopt traditionally prescribed roles and the ideology that supports them.

In a related vein, Fischer (2006) utilized experimental methods to test the hypothesis that women's BS attitudes are a self-protective response to environments they perceive as hostile to women. As predicted, BS attitudes were strongest for women exposed to information suggesting that men hold negative attitudes toward women (as opposed to participants exposed to information suggesting that men hold positive attitudes toward women or to no information at all). Moreover, this relationship remained significant after controlling for attitudes toward feminism. Importantly, HS attitudes were not predicted by men's attitudes toward women. In this U.S. sample of undergraduate women, participants did not adopt hostile attitudes toward women in response to men's negative attitudes. Fischer conceptualized the endorsement of BS attitudes as a "strategy of defiance" in the face of environmental hostility that allows women to protect self- and group-esteem. However, such responses ultimately reinforce existing systems of inequality.

Women's endorsement of benevolent and hostile ideologies has been linked with relational patterns in a sample of college women and young professionals in Ukraine (Yakushko, 2005). More specifically, higher BS toward women was associated with stronger fears about being intimate in relationships. Additionally, women with higher BS and HS toward women reported feeling more uncertain or anxious about being in relationships with men. These findings suggest that ambivalent sexism toward women may have important implications for relational functioning in women.

Self-Silencing

Relational theories recognize the centrality of women's relationships to psychological development and suggest that gender socialization processes encourage girls and women to define their sense of self through relationships with others (Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1986). Likewise, Jack's (1991, Jack & Dill, 1992) self-silencing model is based on the contention that relationships are of central importance to women and also subject to the influence of larger sociocultural messages related to gender. She proposed that cultural norms and prescriptions that both encourage and devalue women's relational orientation promote the development of schemas about how to create and maintain intimate relationships, which can lead women to silence feelings, thoughts, and actions in important relationships. More specifically, self-silencing refers to removing critical aspects of the self from dialogue for specific relational purposes, namely in an attempt to maintain the relationship (Jack, 1999). Self-silencing in relationships, in turn, results in loss of self and renders women susceptible to symptoms of depression (Jack, 1991).

Jack's (1991) self-silencing model, developed through a longitudinal study of depressed women, identifies sociocultural messages and prescriptions as playing a

prominent role in women's relational functioning. Problematic relational patterns, involving suppression of voice and loss of self, are evident as women attempt to embody images imposed on them by partners, family, and the larger culture. Moreover, the process of accommodating to powerful cultural standards that largely discount feminine knowledge, perspectives, and values may ultimately leave women afraid or unable to name their own experiences in relationship. Self-silencing is ultimately marked by a decreased ability to manifest and affirm aspects of the self that feel central to one's identity in relationships (Jack, 1999).

Jack (1999) contended that, even today, women continue to be socialized within the context of prevailing cultural messages dictating what it means to be a "good woman." Moreover, along with other relational scholars (e.g., Miller, 1986), she reconceptualized traditionally pathologizing views of women (i.e., as dependent, weak, passive, and masochistic) as reflective of women's relational adaptation within a larger cultural context rather than reflective of internal, psychological weakness. The internalization of idealized cultural prescriptions for women ultimately challenges the ability to present oneself authentically in relationship.

Internalized imperatives of feminine virtue require a posture in relationship that is essentially impossible to attain. The relational outgrowth of idealized notions of what it means to be a "good woman" require perfection—perfect looks, perfect qualities, and perfect behavior (Jack, 1991). Moreover, because women are given the message that such imperatives hold the promise of securing intimacy in heterosexual relationships, they are viewed as positive ways of being in relationship; ultimately, however, adopting such a relational posture places striving for intimacy at direct odds with authenticity. More

specifically, such underlying beliefs about how to connect intimately with others may lead women to subordinate their own needs in relationship and to believe that acting according to their own needs is selfish and ultimately disruptive to the relationship.

Women's efforts to hide important parts of themselves in order to achieve intimacy and to maintain important relationships also eliminate the possibility of real mutuality in the relationship. Mutuality is considered a prerequisite for intimacy (Jack, 1991) and promotes growth through relationships (Genero et al., 1992). The act of self-silencing in relationship is an example of the "central relational paradox" highlighted in RCT, which is characterized by the process of keeping large parts of oneself out of relationships in an effort to maintain connection (Miller & Stiver, 1997). Consistent with Jack's self-silencing theory, relational-cultural theorists consider such attempts to attain relational connection based on inauthenticity to be at the root of many psychological problems, particularly for women.

Accordingly, extant research supports a relationship between self-silencing and a number of variables relevant to psychological health. Self-silencing has been consistently linked to depression in samples of both women and men (e.g., Ali & Toner, 2001; Cramer et al., 2005; Gratch, Bassett, & Attra, 1995), to disordered eating patterns in women (Frank & Thomas, 2003; Piran & Cormier, 2005; Wechsler, Riggs, Stabb, & Marshall, 2006), to various partner and relational variables in heterosexual couples (Harper & Welsh, 2007; Thompson, 1995; Thompson et al., 2001; Uebelacker, Courtnage, & Whisman, 2003), to psychosocial adaption in women with cancer (Kayser et al., 1999), and to decreased improvement in depressive symptoms post-therapy in a sample of women seeking counseling (Ali, Oatley, & Toner, 2002).

Additionally, self-silencing has been examined as an important relational construct linking various psychosocial variables with depression. For example, in their sample of community participants involved in a committed relationship, Thompson et al. (2001) reported that self-silencing mediated the association between perceived spousal criticism and depressive symptoms for women and the association between perceptions of the father and current romantic partner and depression in men. Additionally, Uebelacker et al. (2003) found that self-silencing mediated the relationship between marital dissatisfaction and symptoms of depression for women but not for men in a community sample of married individuals, while Whiffen, Foot, and Thompson (2007) reported that self-silencing mediated marital conflict and depression for both women and men in another community sample. Flett, Besser, Hewitt, and Davis (2007) reported that self-silencing functioned as both a moderator and partial mediator of the link between socially prescribed perfectionism and depression in a mixed gender university sample. Finally, Cramer et al. (2005) identified self-silencing as a mediator of instrumentality and depression for undergraduate women and men. These findings suggest that self-silencing may be an important factor linking various psychosocial contexts and experiences with psychological health and that it may function differently for women and men.

Although Jack proposed the construct of self-silencing to account for depressive symptoms in women, a number of studies have demonstrated that both women and men self-silence in relationship and that men may do so more than women (Cramer & Thoms, 2003; Duarte & Thompson, 1999; Gratch et al., 1995; Remen, Chambless, & Rodebaugh, 2002). However, it has been argued that women and men may self-silence for different reasons (Gratch et al., 1995). In fact, studies exploring the factor structure of the

Silencing the Self Scale (STSS; Jack & Dill, 1992), a self-report measure developed to measure the intensity of an individual's self-silencing schema, have revealed varying factor solutions for women and men (Cramer & Thoms, 2003; Remen et al., 2002). Remen et al. concluded that tests of convergent and discriminant validity supported the construct validity of the STSS for women, but not for men.

Additionally, findings from a number of studies support a significant relationship between self-silencing and depression in samples of women (Ali et al., 2002; Ali & Toner, 2001) and in samples of women and men (Cramer et al., 2005; Flett et al., 2007; Gratch et al., 1995; Harper & Welsh, 2007; Thompson, 1995; Thompson et al., 2001; Uebelacker et al., 2003; Whiffen et al., 2007). Moreover, while associations between self-silencing and depression have generally been higher for women than men and some evidence suggests that self-silencing may account for nearly twice as much variance in depression for women as for men (Thompson, 1995; Uebelacker et al., 2003), other studies have demonstrated no significant difference by gender (Gratch et al., 1995; Harper & Welsh, 2007).

Empirical evidence supports that self-silencing demonstrates a consistent relationship with various factors relevant to psychological health and may be an important factor linking psychosocial variables and depression. The inconsistency of findings related to self-silencing in women and men seems to suggest that further examination of the construct is warranted. In particular, it might be useful to consider self-silencing in the context of sociocultural experiences unique to women (i.e., sexism) to further elucidate the saliency of the construct to women's mental health. In fact, Jack (1991; Jack & Dill, 1992) argued that the extent to which women self-silence is impacted

by the specific social or relational contexts in which they find themselves. Finally, a recent study supported self-silencing as a mediator between women's experiences of chronic sexism and psychological distress (Hurst & Beesley, 2008), thereby identifying it as an important relational process in women's attempts to cope with sexist discrimination.

Perceived Sexist Discrimination, Ambivalent Sexism, Self-Silencing, and Psychological Distress

The current project tested a model that is informed by the previously reviewed theoretical and empirical literature. First, consistent with RCT and self-silencing theory (e.g., Jack, 1991; Mille & Stiver, 1997), which both purport that sociocultural messages, including sexist discrimination, are subject to internalization by members of marginalized groups, and empirical evidence suggesting that cultural discrimination predicts internalized oppression (e.g., Hill & Fischer, 2008), this study examined whether perceived sexist events occurring within the past year and over a lifetime predict ambivalently sexist attitudes by college women, toward women. More specifically, the differential impact of perceived discrimination was examined by exploring women's endorsement of both HS and BS attitudes toward women. Consistent with cross-cultural and experimental research (e.g., Fischer, 2006; Glick et al., 2000) suggesting that women are more likely to endorse benevolent ideologies toward women when confronted with hostilely sexist environments, it was predicted that higher levels of perceived sexist events would predict BS, but not HS, in a sample of college women.

This project also tested whether perceived sexist events predicted self-silencing in this sample of college women. Consistent with previous findings (Hurst & Beesley,

2008), it was expected that women's experience of lifetime sexist events would predict increased self-silencing in relationship. The absence of a relationship between self-silencing and sexist events occurring over the past year in the previous study suggested a more direct link between recent sexism and distress. Examining the relationship between cultural experiences and relational functioning is consistent with RCT and self-silencing theory's recognition of the powerful influence of cultural imperatives on the construction of, and behavior in, relationships (Jack, 1991; Miller & Stiver, 1997). Additionally, based on a substantial body of supporting literature (e.g., Fischer & Holz, 2007; Klonoff et al., 2000; Moradi & Subich, 2002), perceived sexist events were expected to directly predict increased psychological distress.

This study also examined whether women's internalization of sexist ideology impacts relational functioning. Such a relationship is supported by empirical work demonstrating that women's endorsement of HS and BS attitudes was related to intimate relational patterns (Yakushko, 2005). This finding is consistent with RCT's conceptualization of an inextricable link between cultural controlling images and relational images, which ultimately form the foundation for relational functioning. Moreover, ambivalent sexism theory (Glick & Fiske, 1996) supports that BS, with its idealization of traditional women and emphasis on reinforcing traditional feminine gender roles, is likely more directly linked with restrictive relational patterns (i.e., self-silencing). Accordingly, the process of self-silencing is purported to reflect women's relational adaptation to idealized cultural imperatives for what it means to be a "good woman" (Jack, 1991). Therefore, it was expected that women's endorsement of BS, but not necessarily HS, would predict increased self-silencing in college women.

Additionally, BS was expected to mediate the hypothesized relationship between perceived sexist events and self-silencing.

The "central relational paradox" process highlighted in both RCT and self-silencing theory (Jack, 1991; Miller & Stiver, 1997) is considered to be a fundamental source of psychological distress. Moreover, this may be particularly true for women, who are encouraged through gender socialization processes to define a sense of self through relationships (Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1986). It makes sense that the lack of authenticity and mutuality inherent in the removal of important aspects of the self in order to maintain intimate relationships would create distress. Therefore, self-silencing was anticipated to predict increased psychological distress in college women. This hypothesized relationship is supported by several studies linking self-silencing to various measures of psychological health (e.g., Ali et al., 2002; Crameret al., 2005; Hurst & Beesley, 2008; Piran & Cormier, 2005).

Furthermore, consistent with theoretical contentions that controlling images impact relational functioning, which in turn impacts psychological functioning (Miller & Stiver, 1997; Walker, 2004), it was expected that self-silencing would mediate the relationship between women's endorsement of BS and psychological distress. This expectation is supported by research identifying social support as a key variable linking internalized sexism and distress (Szymanski & Kashubeck-West, 2008).

Alternatively, it was anticipated that endorsement of HS attitudes toward women would directly predict increased psychological distress. Possessing a hostile ideology toward members of one's group might be expected to influence distress directly, perhaps as a function of the inherent conflict women may feel as a result of directing hostility

toward other women. Moreover, it is conceivable that some of this hostility might also be simultaneously directed inward, toward the individual women endorsing an HS ideology. This hypothesized relationship is supported by research suggesting that women higher in HS report negative perceptions of menstruating women (Forbes, Adams-Curtis, White, & Holmgren, 2003), greater body dissatisfaction (Forbes, Doroszewicz, Card, & Adams-Curtis, 2004), and endorsement of Western beauty ideals (Forbes, Collingsworth, Jobe, Braun, & Wise, 2007).

In sum, the literature reviewed supported a proposed model for the current study. The purpose of this study was to examine perceived experiences of sexism occurring within the past year and over a lifetime as they relate to women's psychological distress. Additionally, hypothesized mediating effects of internalized sexism, measured by women's endorsement of ambivalently sexist attitudes toward women, and self-silencing in relationships were examined within the proposed sexism-distress model. The hypothesized mediation model is shown in Figure 1. Specifically, the following hypotheses were examined:

Hypothesis 1: When examined concurrently in path analysis, lifetime sexist events, recent sexist events, and hostile sexism will have direct and unique links to psychological distress.

Hypothesis 2: Benevolent sexism will mediate (either partially or fully) the relationship between perceived sexist events and self-silencing.

Hypothesis 3: Self-silencing, in turn, will mediate (either partially or fully) the relationship between benevolent sexism and psychological distress.

Chapter Three

Methods

Participants

Initially, 312 women participated in the study. However, the final analyses included 297 participants, after removing outliers and participants with over 80% missing instrument data. The mean age of the sample was 20.15 (*SD* = 1.96) and ranged from 18 to 34 years of age. Roughly 11% of the participants were first-year students, 35% were sophomores, 32% were juniors, and 22% were seniors. The ethnicity of the women was largely Caucasian (80%), with approximately 6% identifying as American Indian/Native American, 5% African American, 3% Latina/Hispanic, 3% other, and 3% Asian American. Three percent of the students reported identifying as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered. Family income as reported by participants was less than $35,000 for 16% of participants, between $36,000 and $55,000 for 15%, between $56,000 and $75,000 for 15%, and greater than $75,000 for 52%, with 2% not reporting family income. The demographics of study participants were similar to the overall university population in terms of family income and ethnicity.

Instruments

Four instruments and a demographic information form (Appendix A) were administered for the purposes of this study. The instruments included the Schedule of Sexist Events (SSE; Johnson et al., 2005), the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI; Glick & Fiske, 1996), the Silencing the Self Scale (STSS; Jack, 1992), and the Outcome Questionnaire 45 (OQ45; Lambert, Lunnen, Umphress, Hansen, & Burlingame, 1994).

Schedule of Sexist Events (SSE). The SSE (Klonoff & Landrine, 1995) is a self-report instrument consisting of 20 items measuring perceptions of recent and lifetime sexist discrimination in women's lives. Sample items include: "How many times have you been treated unfairly by your co-workers, fellow students or colleagues because you are a woman?" "How many times have people made inappropriate or unwanted sexual advances to you because you are a woman?" and "How many times have you been made fun of, picked on, pushed, shoved, hit, or threatened with harm because you are a woman?" Participants respond using a scale indicating how often each sexist event has happened, with response options of *1 (never), 2 (once in a while or less than 10% of the time), 3 (sometimes or 10%-25% of the time), 4 (a lot or 26%-49% of the time), 5 (most of the time or 50%-70% of the time),* and *6 (almost all of the time or more than 70% of the time).* Each item requires two responses: one for frequency with which the event has occurred in the past year and one for the frequency with which the event has occurred over one's entire lifetime. Higher scores indicate a greater amount of perceived sexist discrimination.

Internal consistency estimates for the SSE-Recent and Lifetime subscales have been in the low .90s (Klonoff & Landrine, 1995). In the current sample, Cronbach's alphas for the Recent and Lifetime subscales were, .86 and .89 respectively. Klonoff and Landrine (1995) found that SSE scores correlated significantly and positively with measures of daily hassles and stressful life events. Evidence for discriminant validity was demonstrated with nonsignificant or negligible correlations between SSE scores and measures of social desirability (Fischer, Tokar, & Mergl, 2000). Factor analysis of SSE-Recent and Lifetime subscales revealed four interrelated factors: sexist degradation,

sexism in distant relationships, sexism in close relationships, and sexism in the workplace.

Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI). The ASI (Glick & Fiske, 1996) is a 22-item self-report instrument designed to measure benevolent and hostile sexism. Participants respond to items using a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (*disagree strongly*) to 5 (*agree strongly*). After reverse scoring six items, higher scores reflect greater levels of hostile and benevolent sexism. A sample item from the 11-item Hostile Sexism subscale includes: "Women seek to gain power over men by getting control over them." Alternatively, a sample item from the 11-item Benevolent Sexism subscale is: "Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess."

Internal consistency estimates for the ASI have ranged from .80 to the low .90s for the Hostile Sexism subscale and .70 to the upper .80s for the Benevolent Sexism subscale (e.g., Fischer, 2006; Glick & Fiske, 1996; Viki & Abrams, 2003). In the present sample Cronbach's alphas were .80 for the Hostile Sexism subscale and .78 for the Benevolent Sexism subscale. Convergent and discriminant validity has been supported through correlations in the expected direction with other gender-related measures and measures of contemporary sexism (Masser & Abrams, 1999). Moreover, evidence of factorial validity has been demonstrated through confirmatory factor analyses across multiple cultures (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Glick et al., 2000).

Silencing the Self Scale (STSS). The STSS (Jack & Dill, 1992) is a 31-item self-report scale designed to measure behavior in and beliefs about intimate relationships. Participants respond on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*, with higher scores indicating greater self-silencing. Items reflect four rationally

derived subscales: Silencing the Self (e.g., “I don’t speak my feelings in an intimate relationship when I know that they will cause disagreement”), Externalized Self-Perception (e.g., “I tend to judge myself by how other people see me”), Divided Self (e.g., “Often I look happy enough on the outside, but inwardly I feel angry and rebellious”), and Care as Self-Sacrifice (e.g., “Caring means putting the other person’s needs in front of my own”).

Jack and Dill reported an alpha of .86 for the total STSS score. The four STSS subscales have been found to be highly intercorrelated (Jack & Dill). Therefore, the total scale score was used in this study, and the Cronbach’s alpha for this sample was .85. Jack and Dill found that STSS scores were correlated in the expected direction with depression scores and across women of varying social contexts. Further evidence for the construct validity of the STSS in a sample of undergraduate women was provided by predicted associations with both attachment and personality styles (Remen et al., 2002).

Outcome Questionnaire 45 (OQ45). Subjective psychological distress was assessed with the OQ45 (Lambert et al., 1994). The scale consists of 45 items that are rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *never* to *almost always* in regard to how much discomfort they have caused the participant during the past week. The range of total scores is 0-180, with a higher score indicating that the individual is reporting a higher level of total psychological distress. Three subscales measure symptoms of distress, social-role functioning, and interpersonal difficulties. In a previous study (Frey, Tobin, & Beesley, 2004), subscales were fairly highly correlated (r = .62 and above), and total alpha scores were .93 for women. Based on research suggesting problems with

multicollinearity among the subscales, the total score was used to assess psychological distress. In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha was .93 for the total score.

Procedure

Female students were recruited from undergraduate courses at a large, public Southwestern university. Some participants received course credit in exchange for their participation; however, other options for course credit were available to all students. Potential participants who met inclusion criteria provided an e-mail address to the researcher and were then sent a link to an electronic survey. Data was collected utilizing a web-survey (i.e., Survey Monkey) developed and maintained by the University of Oklahoma Center for Educational Development and Research (CEDaR) under the direction of the researcher. The women who chose to participate were then taken to an online informed consent page, where they were given the opportunity to either participate or to opt out of the study. Those who chose to participate then completed a demographic form followed by the STSS, ASI, OQ45, and SSE. Because the study was implemented entirely online, there was no way to counterbalance the instruments; however, careful consideration was given to the order of the instruments in an attempt to minimize order effects as much as possible.

At the completion of the study, those participants who completed the entire study were offered an opportunity to enter a raffle for a $50 gift card. Entrance into the raffle required participants to enter a valid email address and/or mailing address, which was kept in a separate database and not connected to survey responses in order to maintain confidentiality.

Data Analysis

Consistent with Karr and Larson's (2005) call for counseling psychology research informed by theories or models, as well as the potential clinical utility of identifying specific processes underlying women's experiences of discrimination, the current study proposed to use path analysis to test a comprehensive model of perceived sexism and college women's psychological distress. Path analysis allows the concurrent examination of the proposed linear function of internalized sexism and self-silencing within the relationship between perceived sexist discrimination and distress.

Path analysis, an extension of multiple linear regression, is a statistical technique that allows for testing of more complex models than multiple regression (Streiner, 2005). Not only can path analysis support the examination of several intervening or mediating variables, but it also allows for estimation of presumed causal relationships among variables and both direct and indirect effects. Moreover, it allows the researcher to test the overall fit of the model to the data in order to determine if the theoretically derived model is consistent with the actual observed data (Mertler & Vannatta, 2006). Path analysis requires that researchers carefully develop the proposed model. More specifically, the model should be both parsimonious yet include as many relevant variables as possible. Additionally, relationships among variables must be specified within a model that makes both clinical and theoretical sense (Streiner).

In the present study, path analysis was conducted utilizing maximum likelihood estimation (MLE) to test the proposed relationships among observed variables. After examination of the hypothesized model's fit to the data, a trimmed model was developed. Kline (2005) cautioned that model specification driven by data alone may capitalize on

chance. Therefore, consideration of relevant theory was utilized to develop a respecified model. Finally, a plausible alternative model with a different configuration of paths among the variables of interest was also tested. Kline recommended testing alternative models to decrease confirmation bias toward hypothesized models.

Chapter Four

Results

Preliminary Analyses

The data were examined to assess assumptions for the statistical analyses. No violations emerged. Correlations among variables of interest and continuous demographic variables were also examined. Age was positively and significantly correlated ($r = .21$, $p = .001$) with LSE, while feminist identity was positively and significantly correlated with both lifetime ($r = .15$, $p < .05$) and recent ($r = .14$, $p < .05$) sexist events. Previous research supports a significant relationship between income and psychological distress (e.g., Moradi & Subich, 2002); therefore, a one-way ANOVA was performed to determine if significant differences in OQ45 scores would emerge among family income categories (i.e., < $35,000, $35,000-$75,000, > $75,000). The main effect of income on OQ45 score was significant, $F(2, 229) = 6.94$, $p = .001$. Tukey's post hoc tests revealed that women who reported family incomes from $35,000 to $75,000 exhibited significantly higher mean scores on the OQ45 than women who reported family incomes greater than $75,000. Because the STSS measures self-silencing in intimate relationships, an independent samples *t*-test was conducted to explore significant differences in STSS scores based on participants' current self-reported relationship status. The t-test was significant ($t = -4.04$, $p < .001$), with women currently involved in an intimate relationship scoring significantly lower on the STSS than women not involved in a relationship. Participant age, feminist identity, family income, and relationship status were controlled for in subsequent analyses. Categorical variables were effect coded.

Partial correlations of the variables of interest controlling for participant age,

feminist identity, family income, and relationship status are presented in Table 1. Several correlations were in the predicted direction with LSE ($r = .25$, $p < .001$), RSE ($r = .21$, $p = .001$), STSS ($r = .47$, $p < .001$), and HS ($r = .48$, $p = .001$) all positively and significantly correlated with OQ45 scores. Additionally, BS ($r = .17$, $p < .01$) was positively and significantly correlated with STSS scores. Interestingly, HS ($r = .90$, $p < .001$) also demonstrated a strong, positive, and significant correlation with STSS. Inconsistent with predictions, LSE and RSE did not correlate significantly with BS or STSS.

Path Analysis

Path analysis was conducted utilizing maximum likelihood estimation (MLE) with list-wise deletion in LISREL 8.80 to assess how the proposed model in Figure 1 fit the sample data. Figure 2 depicts the path coefficients for the proposed relationships among the variables in the model. Based on the fit indices, the hypothesized model was not a good fit to the data. The χ^2 value for the present model was 500.37 ($p < .001$), indicating that the observed and model-implied correlation matrices were significantly different. Furthermore, the Goodness of Fit (GFI) and Comparative Fit (CFI) indices were not optimal (≥ 0.95) at 0.79 and 0.69, respectively (Shumacher & Lomax, 2004). The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) was 0.22, which is greater than 0.10, and also indicates poor fit between sample and model-implied correlations. Likewise, the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) value for the present model was 0.40, which falls well above optimal levels ($\leq .06$).

With respect to predicted paths, several hypotheses were supported. Psychological distress (OQ45) was significantly and positively predicted by self-

silencing (STSS: β = .22, *t* = 4.61), lifetime sexist events (LSE: β = .25, *t* = 3.12), and hostile sexism (HS: β = .30, *t* = 6.27), but not recent sexist events (RSE). The predictors accounted for 24% of the variance in psychological distress. Self-silencing (STSS) was significantly and positively predicted by benevolent sexism (BS: β = .20, *t* = 3.57), which accounted for 4% of the variance in self-silencing. However, lifetime sexist events and recent sexist events did not predict benevolent sexism.

Respecified Model

Partial correlations and path coefficients from the predicted model were utilized to develop a respecified model (Figure 3) that is consistent with available theory and research. Recent sexist events (RSE) was removed from the model due to (1) a non-significant path from RSE to psychological distress and (2) multicollinearity between RSE and LSE (β = .80, *t* = 10.66) in the hypothesized model. The path between LSE and BS was also removed due to non-significance in the original model. Based on the significant and positive partial correlation (*r* = .90, *p* = .001) observed between HS and self-silencing, a path was added from HS to STSS in the modified model.

Based on the fit indices, the modified model fit the data quite well. The χ^2 value for the modified model was 2.05 (*p* = .36), indicating that the observed and model-implied correlation matrices were not significantly different. The GFI and CFI indices reached optimal levels, each at 1.00. Likewise, the SRMR was .01, indicating excellent fit, while the RMSEA value for the modified model was .009, clearly falling within optimal levels.

Psychological distress (OQ45) was significantly and positively predicted by self-silencing (STSS: β = .23, *t* = 2.07), lifetime sexist events (LSE: β = .27, *t* = 5.65), and

hostile sexism (HS: β = .29, *t* = 2.69). The predictors accounted for 33% of the variance in psychological distress. Self-silencing (STSS) was significantly and positively predicted by hostile sexism (HS: β = .89, *t* = 34.52), but not benevolent sexism (BS). HS accounted for 81% of the variance in self-silencing.

Sobel tests of mediation were carried out using Kristopher Preacher's online interactive calculator (http://people.ku.edu/~preacher/sobel/sobel.htm). The indirect effect of hostile sexism on psychological distress via self-silencing was statistically significant ($p < .001$). The standardized indirect effect of hostile sexism on psychological distress via self-silencing was .20.

Alternative Model

A plausible alternative model was also tested. It could be argued that women who are experiencing psychological distress are more likely to report experiences of sexism, endorse sexist ideologies, and self-silence in relationships. Therefore, the alternative model (Figure 4) regressed psychological distress (OQ45) onto lifetime sexist events (LSE), benevolent sexism (BS), hostile sexism (HS), and self-silencing (STSS).

The alternative model was not a good fit to the data. The χ^2 value for the presented model was 433.83 ($p < .001$), indicating that the observed and model-implied correlation matrices were significantly different. Furthermore, the GFI and CFI indices were not optimal at 0.74 and 0.41, respectively. The SRMR was 0.19, which also indicates poor fit, while the RMSEA value for the present model was 0.38, which falls well above optimal levels.

Chapter Five

Discussion

The present study examined internalized sexism and self-silencing in intimate relationships as mediating variables in the well-established relationship between perceived sexism and psychological distress in a sample of college women. Present findings contribute to the literature by comprehensively investigating the interrelationships among contextual, interpersonal, and individual psychological experiences. To date, no other study has simultaneously explored the role of women's endorsement of sexist ideology and relational processes within the sexism-distress link. Furthermore, examining sociocultural and relational variables that contribute to women's distress is important to informing clinical interventions for women.

Although the hypothesized model proved a poor fit to the data, standardized path coefficients revealed some interesting findings. While partial correlations suggested significant relationships between women's experiences of recent (i.e., within the past year) and lifetime sexist events and psychological distress, when examined concurrently in the path model, the impact of recent sexist events on distress became negligible. For this sample of college women, it appears that chronic experiences of sexism were a more salient predictor of distress than recent experiences. This finding is inconsistent with previous research (e.g., Hurst & Beesley, 2008; Moradi & Subich, 2002) demonstrating direct and unique links between recent sexism and psychological distress.

Current findings seem to support the need for clinical attention to the potential impact of long-standing experiences of sexist discrimination when considering psychological distress in college women. Such an emphasis is consistent with a central

tenet of contemporary stress research, which posits that among the stressors that contribute to inequalities in mental and physical health are those that are experienced across the life course (Pearlin, Schieman, Fazio, & Meersman, 2005). This does not suggest that acute stressors, including acute sexist discrimination, are not important indicators of psychological distress. In fact, race-related models of stress (Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999; Harrell, 2000), which are grounded in the interactional model of stress originally proposed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), posit that discrimination may operate as an acute stressor leading to acute physiological and psychological consequences as well as a chronic stressor that can lead to chronic distress.

Interestingly, perceived experiences of sexism were not significantly associated with benevolent sexism in the present sample. Previous research (Fischer, 2006; Glick et al., 2000) has suggested that women may be more likely to adopt benevolently sexist (BS) ideologies, but not hostile sexism (HS), in response to environments that are sexist toward women. Glick et al. posited that women may find BS more attractive than HS because it promises certain rewards (e.g., protection, adoration, intimacy) from the more powerful gender group.

The current finding may be impacted by whether participants identified or labeled negative experiences as sexist in nature. In fact, previous studies demonstrating a positive relationship between sexist environments and BS in women have measured sexist experiences quite differently than it was measured in the current study. For example, a cross-cultural study (Glick et al, 2000) utilized objective measures (i.e., United Nations indices of gender inequality), which included national data on gender disparities in economic and political life, life expectancy, education, and standards of

living as indicators of experienced sexism. Alternatively, an experimental study (Fischer, 2006) manipulated social information to lead women to believe that men hold negative attitudes toward women. In both cases, female participants were not required to identify these negative experiences as sexist.

In contrast, the Schedule of Sexist Events (SSE), used in the current study to measure perceived sexism, asked participants to identify various negative events that occurred "because you are a woman," thereby requiring women to attribute negative events to sexist discrimination. Because the SSE measures *perceived* experiences of sexism, it may not offer an accurate gauge of *actual* sexist experiences or environments. Previous research (e.g., Brooks & Perot, 1991; Moradi & Subich, 2002) suggests that feminist identity is related to recognizing and labeling sexist events. Likewise, the current study found that feminist identity demonstrated a positive and significant relationship to reports of recent and lifetime sexist events.

Another surprising finding in the present study was the strong, positive relationship observed between HS and self-silencing. Jack (1991) contends that self-silencing, a restrictive relational style characterized by the removal of critical aspects of self in intimate relationships, is informed by internalized imperatives of feminine virtue. Likewise, BS is associated with idealization of traditional women and reinforcement of traditional feminine gender roles (Glick & Fiske, 1996) and was hypothesized to demonstrate direct links to self-silencing. HS, on the other hand, is associated with overtly negative views toward women and was not necessarily expected to predict restrictive relational patterns (i.e., self-silencing).

Nonetheless, current correlational data demonstrating positive relationships

between both HS and BS and self-silencing may be consistent with theoretical contentions that these two forms of sexism function as a complementary system of punishment and reward that supports gender inequality (Glick & Fiske, 1999). Possessing positive feelings toward women who embrace conventional gender roles (BS) and negative feelings toward women who deviate from conventional roles—for example, feminists, lesbians, and career women (HS)—*both* demonstrated relationships to restrictive relational functioning in intimate relationships. These results are also consistent with Yakushko's (2005) finding that women's endorsement of HS and BS was related to anxiety in close relationships in a sample of Ukrainian women and relational-cultural theory's (RCT) contention that cultural controlling images inform relational functioning (Miller, 2002). In this case, internalized sexism (i.e., endorsing a sexist ideology toward one's own gender group) may represent a culturally constructed "story" about how women should be in the world, which ultimately defines, justifies, and restricts behavior in relationship.

Path coefficients from the respecified model shed additional light on the relationships between ambivalent sexism and self-silencing in this sample of college women. Although partial correlations and path coefficients from the hypothesized model supported a relationship between BS and self-silencing, when a path from HS to self-silencing was included in the respecified model, the influence of BS on self-silencing became insignificant and negligible. Moreover, the relationship between HS and self-silencing remained significant and strong. This finding suggests that college women endorsing greater hostility toward women who deviate from traditional roles may be more likely to adopt a restrictive style in their intimate heterosexual relationships

characterized by loss of voice and suppression of self.

It is possible that potential retribution for violating prescribed conventional gender norms is a greater motivator to hide important aspects of self in relationship than are the rewards associated with complying with traditional gender roles. In other words, women who self-silence may be influenced by the potential relational consequences of deviating from dominant images of the "good woman"—the woman who is consistently loving, kind, and understanding in her relationships with men and children (Jack, 1991). It is possible that women who challenge men's power (e.g., feminists, lesbians, career women) are considered unable or unworthy to maintain intimate connections with men. Accordingly, self-silencing may represent an interpersonal manifestation of the renunciation of parts of the female self that are viewed as unacceptable for connection (e.g., sexuality, feminist ideals, career orientation). HS is reserved for women who are perceived to challenge men's power (Glick & Fiske, 1996), and perhaps these are the very qualities that are "silenced" in order to maintain connection in a larger culture that supports gender inequality in heterosexual relationships.

As predicted, HS contributed to significant variance in psychological distress. There appear to be mental health consequences related to endorsing a hostile ideology toward members of one's gender group. Moreover, consistent with previous research (e.g., Ali & Toner, 2001; Cramer et al., 2005; Gratch et al., 1995), self-silencing significantly predicted psychological distress in this sample of college women. This finding is consistent with feminist-relational theories (e.g., Gilligan, 1982; Jack, 1991; Miller, 1986) that recognize the centrality of relationships in women's lives and the influence of relationships on psychological well-being. Although rooted in efforts to

maintain the relationship, holding back significant parts of self significantly restricts the possibility for authenticity and mutuality in relationship—processes that are considered fundamental to women's psychological growth (Miller & Stiver, 1997).

Additionally, tests of mediation revealed that self-silencing was a significant partial mediator of the relationship between HS and psychological distress in this sample of college women. Again, the mediating effect of self-silencing is consistent with a central theoretical tenet of RCT, which purports that the internalization of dominant societal messages (e.g., sexism) exerts a powerful impact on the construction of and behavior in relationships (Miller, 2002). Resulting restrictive relational images provide an inner working template for how one must be or what one must do in order to maintain relational connection (Miller & Stiver, 1997; Walker, 2004). In turn, these restrictive relational images, which often involve strategies aimed at keeping important parts of oneself out of the relationship (e.g., self-silencing), ultimately result in isolation, powerlessness, and distress (Miller & Stiver).

Present findings are also consistent with Jack's (1991; Jack & Dill, 1992) conceptualization of self-silencing as highly influenced by cultural and relational contexts rather than representative of a particular personality characteristic or trait. Jack contends that maladaptive relational strategies like dependency or self-silencing, which have been traditionally pathologized in women, are in fact attachment behaviors shaped by cultural norms and inequality in relationships. Present findings suggest that the internalization of cultural norms, in this case hostility toward women who deviate from conventional gender roles, negatively impacts women's relational and psychological functioning.

Results from an alternative model with psychological distress predicting

perceived sexism, internalized sexism, and self-silencing proved a poor fit to the data. This model was proposed as an appropriate alternative model to test the argument that women who are psychologically distressed may be more likely to misinterpret negative events as sexist, to endorse sexist ideologies toward other women, and to demonstrate maladaptive interpersonal patterns in intimate relationships. Although the path coefficients were significant, the model itself was a poor fit to the data. This particular model did not account for the theoretically derived interrelationships among BS, HS, and self-silencing and may have suffered due to increased error within the model. The poor fit observed in the alternative model lends further support for the proposed relationships among ambivalently sexist ideologies and self-silencing in college women.

Limitations and Future Research

It should be noted that the present study has some limitations. One important limitation is the homogeneity of the sample, which is largely comprised of white, heterosexual, and middle-to-upper class college women. This decreases generalizability to more diverse groups of women. Additionally, the non-experimental nature of the present research does not permit clarification of the causal directions of the relationships among the variables tested.

Another limitation of the study is that it relied solely on electronic data collection. However, a study by Gosling, Vazire, Srivastava, and John (2004) found that electronic data is of similar quality as data obtained from traditional paper-and-pencil means in that data was not tainted by false or repeat responders and results were consistent with traditional methods. Even so, they suggested that it is helpful to collect data for research using mixed methods (e.g., collecting via both the internet and traditional paper-and-

pencil forms). This may be particularly meaningful for future research directed at obtaining more diverse participants.

An additional potential caveat in the current study concerns measurement of the self-silencing construct. The factor structure of the Silencing the Self Scale (STSS; Jack & Dill, 1992) has been challenged in examinations of the validity of the scale (Cramer & Thoms, 2003; Remen et al., 2002). While exploratory factor analyses have yielded four-factor solutions generally consistent with Jack's four subscales of the STSS in samples of women, this solution accounts for only approximately a third of the overall measurement variance. In fact, in the current study an exploratory factor analysis utilizing principal axis factoring demonstrated that the four factors of the STSS accounted for 34% of the total item variance. It has been recommended that common factors must explain at least 50% of the total variance to be considered a meaningful factor solution (Floyd & Widaman, 1995). The lower amount of variance accounted for by the STSS suggests that specific factor variance associated with individual items on the scale may be impacting scores more than the underlying construct of self-silencing. However, it should also be noted that tests of convergent and discriminant validity have supported the construct validity of the STSS for women (Remen et al).

Additionally, results from the respecified path model should be interpreted with caution. Kline (2005) warned that model specification entirely driven by empirical criteria, such as statistical significance, may capitalize on chance. In other words, data from a trimmed model that is not informed by relevant theory may reflect an artifact of the particular data set. Therefore, Kline calls for a greater role for theory in model re-specification. Although the current study integrated relevant theory and previous

research into the development of a respecified model, it is important to test the model across other samples in future research.

Finally, it is important to note that identifying a model that is a good fit to current sample data does not "prove" a linear relationship among the proposed constructs. Kline pointed out that path models demonstrating good fit to the sample data are more akin to failing to reject the proposed model. Again, future testing of the model is warranted to further substantiate its utility in describing relationships among ambivalent sexism, self-silencing, and psychological distress in college women.

With these caveats in mind, the present study highlights the potential saliency of internalized sexism and interpersonal processes in college women's psychological distress. More specifically, it suggests that chronic experiences of sexism, endorsement of hostile sexism toward women, and self-silencing in intimate heterosexual relationships directly predict psychological distress. Additionally, self-silencing appears to partially account for the distress experienced by women who endorse hostile sexism, thereby establishing important links among sociocultural, interpersonal, and individual psychological processes.

A potential direction for future research is the examination of additional variables relevant to women's experiences of sexism. Previous research indicates that recognizing sexist discrimination serves a protective function while not recognizing sexism may intensify the distress of negative sexist events (see Moradi & Subich, 2002 for a review). However, current findings and previous research suggest that both recognizing (e.g., Klonoff et al., 2000) and internalizing (e.g., Szymanski & Kashubeck-West, 2008; Thomas et al., 2004) discrimination predicts psychological distress. Moreover,

recognition and internalization of discrimination are not mutually exclusive—one may both recognize discrimination *and* internalize it.

Empowerment, a construct emerging from feminist theory, is characterized by awareness of the interdependence of personal and social identities, gender-role socialization, and relational inequality between men and women in addition to affirmation of traditionally feminine qualities, including communal perspectives and emotional expressiveness (Worell & Remer, 1992). It seems likely that level of empowerment is an important factor predicting women's internalization of sexism. Additionally, empowerment has been found to predict mutuality in women's friendships (Saldana, 2009) and may be particularly relevant to relational processes within intimate heterosexual relationships, which are subject to larger cultural imperatives related to gender.

Another potential avenue for future research is a simultaneous examination of the impact of internalized sexism and self-silencing on health outcomes and health-related behaviors in women. For example, there is ample evidence to suggest that psychosocial factors (e.g., depression, anxiety, anger, social support) are significant predictors of heart disease (see Rozanski, Blumenthal, Davidson, Saab, & Kubzansky, 2005 for a review). Moreover, the American Heart Association (2010) has identified coronary heart disease as the leading cause of death for women in the United States. Considering the potential saliency of sociocultural and relational processes to women's psychological distress, it seems productive to examine similar links to negative health outcomes for women. Additionally, several studies have demonstrated a negative association between self-silencing and safe sex behaviors in diverse samples of women (e.g., Jacobs & Thomlison,

2009; Neely-Smith, 2003; Stokes, 2005). It may be informative to examine the role of internalized sexism in this link, especially considering the potential health risks associated with unsafe sexual behavior (e.g., HIV). Such studies may be particularly useful when considering clinical interventions or prevention efforts targeting women at-risk for negative health outcomes.

Future research examining different potential mediating variables (e.g., empowerment) and outcome variables (e.g., heart disease, safe-sex behaviors) would advance our understanding of women's experiences of sexism. Additionally, research with diverse samples is important in examining whether the current model is applicable to different populations of women, particularly considering that minority women are subject to additional forms of discrimination (e.g., classism, heterosexism, racism). Finally, experimental and longitudinal designs would add greatly to our understanding of the relationships among experiences of sexism, sexist ideology, self-silencing, and distress.

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Partial Intercorrelations of Variables of Interest with Age, Feminist Identity, Income, and Relationship Status Controlled

Variable	***M***	***SD***	***1***	***2***	***3***	***4***	***5***	***6***
Psychological Distress (OQ45)	48.23	20.46	---	.25***	.21**	.47***	.10	.48***
Lifetime Sexist Events (LSE)	37.02	10.17		---	.80***	.02	-.05	-.01
Recent Sexist Events (RSE)	31.72	8.48			---	.06	-.07	.01
Self-Silencing (STSS)	76.61	14.30				---	.17*	.90***
Benevolent Sexism[a] (BS)	2.50	.80					---	.16*
Hostile Sexism[a] (HS)	2.18	.52						

Note. $*p < .01$, $**p = .001$, $***p < .001$

[a]Means and standard deviations reflect average scores

Figure 1.

Hypothesized Model

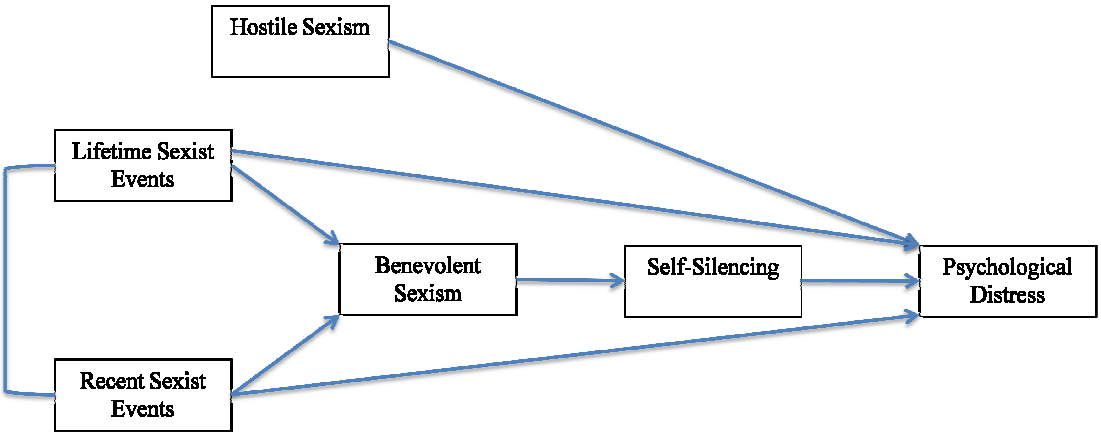
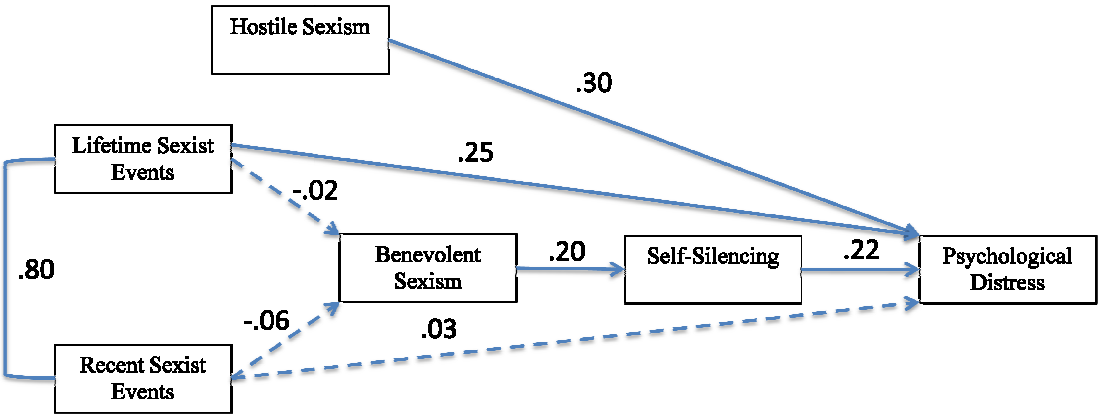


Figure 2.

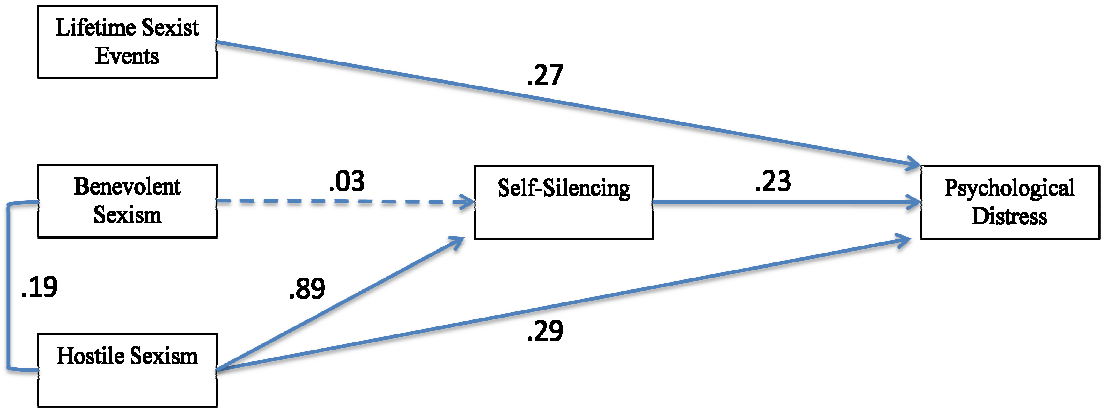
Standardized Regression Weights for Hypothesized Model



Note: All paths statistically significant at $p < .05$ (two-tailed) except paths denoted by dashed line (--).

Figure 3.

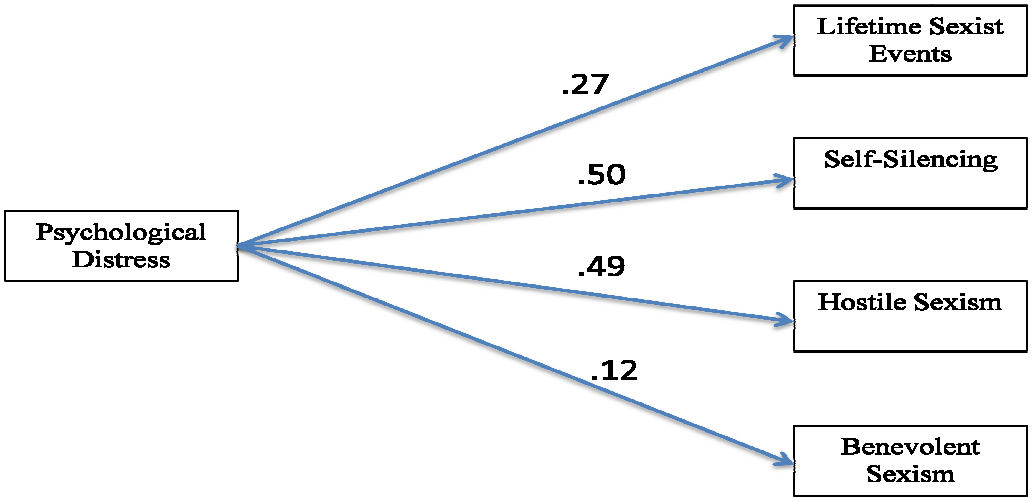
Standardized Regression Weights for Modified Model



Note: All paths statistically significant at $p < .05$ (two-tailed) except path denoted by dashed line (--).

Figure 4.

Standardized Regression Weights for Alternative Model



Note: All paths statistically significant at $p < .05$ (two-tailed).

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APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

The University of Oklahoma

OFFICE FOR HUMAN RESEARCH PARTICIPANT PROTECTION

IRB Number: 12529
Approval Date: March 24, 2009

March 26, 2009

Rebecca Hurst
Dept. Educational Psychology
511 Nebraska
Norman, OK 73069

RE: Women's Experiences, Beliefs and Relationships

Dear Ms. Hurst:

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I have reviewed and granted expedited approval of the above-referenced research study. This study meets the criteria for expedited approval category 7. It is my judgment as Chairperson of the IRB that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, that the proposed research, including the process of obtaining informed consent, will be conducted in a manner consistent with the requirements of 45 CFR 46 as amended; and that the research involves no more than minimal risk to participants.

This letter documents approval to conduct the research as described:

Other Dated: March 09, 2009 Recruitment Script
Other Dated: March 09, 2009 Recruitment Letter
Survey Instrument Dated: March 09, 2009 Instruments
Consent form - Other Dated: March 09, 2009 Information Sheet
Protocol Dated: March 09, 2009
IRB Application Dated: March 09, 2009

As principal investigator of this protocol, it is your responsibility to make sure that this study is conducted as approved. Any modifications to the protocol or consent form, initiated by you or by the sponsor, will require prior approval, which you may request by completing a protocol modification form. All study records, including copies of signed consent forms, must be retained for three (3) years after termination of the study.

The approval granted expires on March 23, 2010. Should you wish to maintain this protocol in an active status beyond that date, you will need to provide the IRB with an IRB Application for Continuing Review (Progress Report) summarizing study results to date. The IRB will request an IRB Application for Continuing Review from you approximately two months before the anniversary date of your current approval.

If you have questions about these procedures, or need any additional assistance from the IRB, please call the IRB office at (405) 325-8110 or send an email to irb@ou.edu.

Cordially,

Donald Baker, Ph.D.
Vice Chair, Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX B: DEMOGRAPHIC FORM

Demographics

In order to successfully complete our study, we would like to know more about you. The information you provide will not be used to identify you in any way.

1. What is your age? _____

2. What year are you currently in at OU?
   _____ 1. Freshman _____ 3. Junior
   _____ 2. Sophomore _____ 4. Senior

3. What ethnicity do you consider yourself?
   _____ 1. African American
   _____ 2. Hispanic or Latino/Latina
   _____ 3. Asian American
   _____ 4. Native American or American Indian
   _____ 5. Caucasian
   _____ 6. Other: Please specify _____

4. What is your major? _____

5. What is your biological sex?
   _____ 1. Female _____ 2. Male

6. How do you describe your sexual identity/orientation?
   _____ 1. Bisexual
   _____ 2. Heterosexual
   _____ 3. Lesbian or Gay
   _____ 4. Transgendered

7. What is your family's yearly income?
   _____ 1. Less than $25,000
   _____ 2. $25,000 – $35,000
   _____ 3. $36,000 – $45,000
   _____ 4. $46,000 – $55,000
   _____ 5. $56,000 – $65,000
   _____ 6. $66,000 – $75,000
   _____ 7. $76,000 – $85,000
   _____ 8. Over $85,000

8. Are you currently involved in a romantic relationship?
   _____ 1. Yes
   _____ 2. No

9. How much do you identify yourself with the label “feminist”?

Not At All		Neutral		Strongly
1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX C: SILENCING THE SELF SCALE

STSS

Please circle the number below that best describes how you feel about each of the statements listed below. If you are currently not in an intimate relationship, please indicate how you felt and acted in your previous relationships

Strongly Disagree 1	Somewhat Disagree 2	Neither Agree Nor Disagree 3	Somewhat Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5

1. I think it is best to put myself first because no one else will look out for me.

2. I don't speak my feelings in an intimate relationship when I know they will cause disagreement.

3. Caring means putting the other person's needs in front of my own.

4. Considering my needs to be as important as those of the people I love is selfish.

5. I find it is harder to be myself when I am in a close relationship than when I am on my own.

6. I tend to judge myself by how I think other people see me.

7. I feel dissatisfied with myself because I should be able to do all the things people are supposed to be able to do these days.

8. When my partner's needs and feelings conflict with my own, I always state mine clearly.

9. In a close relationship, my responsibility is to make the other person happy.

10. Caring means choosing to do what the other person wants, even when I want to do something different.

11. In order to feel good about myself, I need to feel independent and self-sufficient.

12. One of the worst things I can do is to be selfish.

13. I feel I have to act in a certain way to please my partner.

14. Instead of risking confrontations in close relationships, I would rather not rock the boat.

15. I speak my feelings with my partner, even when it leads to problems or disagreements.

16. Often I look happy enough on the outside, but inwardly I feel angry and rebellious.

17. In order for my partner to love me, I cannot reveal certain things about myself to him/her.

18. When my partner's needs or opinions conflict with mine, rather than asserting my own point of view I usually end up agreeing with him/her.

19. When I am in a close relationship I lose my sense of who I am.

20. When it looks as though certain of my needs can't be met in a relationship, I usually realize that they weren't very important anyway.

21. My partner loves and appreciates me for who I am.

22. Doing things just for myself is selfish.

23. When I make decisions, other people's thoughts and opinions influence me more than my own thoughts and opinions.

24. I rarely express my anger at those close to me.

25. I feel that my partner does not know my real self.

26. I think it's better to keep my feelings to myself when they do conflict with my partner's.

27. I often feel responsible for other people's feelings.

28. I find it hard to know what I think and feel because I spend a lot of time thinking about how other people are feeling.

29. In a close relationship I don't usually care what we do, as long as the other person is happy.

30. I try to bury my feelings when I think they will cause trouble in my close relationship(s).

*31. I never seem to measure up to the standards I set for myself.

* If you answered the last question with a 4 or 5, please list up to three standards you feel you don't measure up to.

1.

2.

3.

4.

APPENDIX D: AMBIVALENT SEXISM INVENTORY

ASI

RATING SCALE:

0	1	2	3	4	5
Disagree Strongly	**Disagree Somewhat**	**Disagree Slightly**	**Agree Slightly**	**Agree Somewhat**	**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 be rescued before men.
4. Most women interpret innocent remarks 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, compared to men, tend to have a more refined sense of culture and good taste.

APPENDIX E: OUTCOME QUESTIONNAIRE 45

OQ 45

Below is a list of problems and complaints that people sometimes have. Please read each one carefully. After you have done so, please put an "X" under the category to the right that best describes HOW MUCH DISCOMFORT THAT PROBLEM HAS CAUSED YOU DURING THE PAST WEEK INCLUDING TODAY. Mark only one space for each problem and do not skip any items.	**Never**	**Rarely**	**Sometimes**	**Frequently**	**Almost Always**
1. I get along well with others.					
2. I tire quickly					
3. I feel no interest in things.					
4. I feel stressed at work/school.					
5. I blame myself for things.					
6. I feel irritated.					
7. I feel unhappy in my marriage/significant relationship.					
8. I have thoughts of ending my life.					
9. I feel weak.					
10. I feel fearful.					

11. After heavy drinking, I need a drink the next morning to get going. (If you do not drink, mark “never”)					
12. I find my work/school satisfying.					
13. I am a happy person.					
14. I work/study too much.					
15. I feel worthless.					
16. I am concerned about family troubles.					
17. I have an unfulfilling sex life.					
18. I feel lonely.					
19. I have frequent arguments.					
20. I feel loved and wanted.					
21. I enjoy my spare time.					
22. I have difficulty concentrating.					
23. I feel hopeless about the future.					
24. I like myself.					
25. Disturbing thoughts come into my mind that I cannot get rid of.					
26. I feel annoyed by people who criticize my drinking (or drug use) (If not applicable, mark “never”)					
27. I have an upset stomach.					

28. I am not working/studying as well as I used to.					
29. My heart pounds too much.					
30. I have trouble getting along with friends and close acquaintances.					
31. I am satisfied with my life.					
32. I have trouble at work/school because of drinking (or drug use). (If not applicable, mark "never")					
33. I feel that something bad is going to happen.					
34. I have sore muscles.					
35. I feel afraid of open spaces, of driving, or being on buses, subways, and so forth.					
36. I feel nervous.					
37. I feel my love relationships are full and complete.					
38. I feel that I am not doing well at work/school.					
39. I have too many disagreements at work/school.					
40. I feel something is wrong with my mind.					
41. I have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep.					

42. I feel blue.					
43. I am satisfied with my relationships with others.					
44. I feel angry enough at work/school to do something I might regret.					
45. I have headaches.					

Lambert and Burlingame, 1996

APPENDIX F: SCHEDULE OF SEXIST EVENTS

SSE

Please think carefully about your life as you answer the questions below. For each question, read the question and then answer it twice: answer once for what your ENTIRE LIFE (from when you were a child to now) has been like, and then once for what the PAST YEAR has been like. Mark your answers on the scales provided, using these rules:

1 = NEVER happened
2 = Happened ONCE IN A WHILE (<10% of the time)
3 = Happened SOMETIMES (10-25% of the time)
4 = Happened A LOT (26-49% of the time)
5 = Happened MOST OF THE TIME (50-70% of the time)
6 = Happened ALMOST ALL OF THE TIME (more than 70% of the time)

How many times have you been treated unfairly by teachers or professors because you are a woman?

1. How many times IN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE? **1 2 3 4 5 6**
2. How many times IN THE PAST YEAR? **1 2 3 4 5 6**

How many times have you been treated unfairly by your employer, boss, or supervisors because you are a woman?

3. How many times IN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE? **1 2 3 4 5 6**
4. How many times IN THE PAST YEAR? **1 2 3 4 5 6**

How many times have you been treated unfairly by your co-workers, fellow students or colleagues because you are a woman?

5. How many times IN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE? **1 2 3 4 5 6**
6. How many times IN THE PAST YEAR? **1 2 3 4 5 6**

How many times have you been treated unfairly by people in service jobs (by store clerks, waiters, bartenders, waitresses, bank tellers, mechanics, and others) because you are a woman?

7. How many times IN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE? **1 2 3 4 5 6**
8. How many times IN THE PAST YEAR? **1 2 3 4 5 6**

How many times have you been treated unfairly by strangers because you are a woman?

9. How many times IN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE? **1 2 3 4 5 6**
10. How many times IN THE PAST YEAR? **1 2 3 4 5 6**

How many times have you been treated unfairly by people in helping jobs (by doctors, nurses, psychiatrists, case workers, dentists, school counselors, therapists, pediatricians, school principals, gynecologists, and others) because you are a woman?

11. How many times IN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE? **1 2 3 4 5 6**
12. How many times IN THE PAST YEAR? **1 2 3 4 5 6**

How many times have you been treated unfairly by neighbors because you are a woman?

13. How many times IN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE? **1 2 3 4 5 6**
14. How many times IN THE PAST YEAR? **1 2 3 4 5 6**

How many times have you been treated unfairly by your boyfriend, husband, or other important man in your life because you are a woman?

15. How many times IN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE? **1 2 3 4 5 6**
16. How many times IN THE PAST YEAR? **1 2 3 4 5 6**

How many times were you denied a raise, a promotion, tenure, a good assignment, a job, or other such thing at work that you deserved because you are a woman?

17. How many times IN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE? **1 2 3 4 5 6**
18. How many times IN THE PAST YEAR? **1 2 3 4 5 6**

How many times have you been treated unfairly by your family because you are a woman?

19. How many times IN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE? **1 2 3 4 5 6**
20. How many times IN THE PAST YEAR? **1 2 3 4 5 6**

How many times have people made inappropriate or unwanted sexual advances to you because you are a woman?

21. How many times IN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE? **1 2 3 4 5 6**
22. How many times IN THE PAST YEAR? **1 2 3 4 5 6**

How many times have people failed to show you the respect that you deserve because you are a woman?

23. How many times IN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE? **1 2 3 4 5 6**
24. How many times IN THE PAST YEAR? **1 2 3 4 5 6**

How many times have you wanted to tell someone off for being sexist?

25. How many times IN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE? **1 2 3 4 5 6**
26. How many times IN THE PAST YEAR? **1 2 3 4 5 6**

How many times have you been really angry about something sexist that was done to you?

27. How many times IN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE? **1 2 3 4 5 6**
28. How many times IN THE PAST YEAR? **1 2 3 4 5 6**

How many times were you forced to take drastic steps (such as filing a grievance, filing a lawsuit, quitting your job, moving away, and other actions) to deal with some sexist thing that was done to you?

29. How many times IN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE? **1 2 3 4 5 6**
30. How many times IN THE PAST YEAR? **1 2 3 4 5 6**

How many times have you been called a sexist name like bitch, cunt, chick, or other names?

31. How many times IN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE? **1 2 3 4 5 6**
32. How many times IN THE PAST YEAR? **1 2 3 4 5 6**

How many times have you gotten into an argument or a fight about something sexist that was done or said to you or done to somebody else?

33. How many times IN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE? **1 2 3 4 5 6**
34. How many times IN THE PAST YEAR? **1 2 3 4 5 6**

How many times have you been made fun of, picked on, pushed, shoved, hit, or threatened with harm because you are a woman?

35. How many times IN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE? **1 2 3 4 5 6**
36. How many times IN THE PAST YEAR? **1 2 3 4 5 6**

How many times have you heard people making sexist jokes or degrading sexual jokes?

37. How many times IN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE? **1 2 3 4 5 6**
38. How many times IN THE PAST YEAR? **1 2 3 4 5 6**

How different would your life be now if you HAD NOT BEEN treated in a sexist and unfair way?

39. THROUGHOUT YOUR ENTIRE LIFE:

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
Same as now	Little different	Different in many ways	Different in a lot of ways	Different in most ways	Totally different

40. IN THE PAST YEAR:

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
Same as now	Little different	Different in many ways	Different in a lot of ways	Different in most ways	Totally different

APPENDIX G: PROSPECTUS

Running Head: RELATIONAL-CULTURAL MODEL OF SEXISM

Testing a Relational-Cultural Model of Sexism: Perceived Sexist Discrimination, Ambivalent Sexism, Self-Silencing, and Psychological Distress in College Women

Dissertation Prospectus

Rebecca J. Hurst

University of Oklahoma

January 2009

Chapter One

Overview

Counseling psychologists recognize the importance of attending to the impact of contextual and interpersonal variables on individual mental health. Research has provided empirical support for links between various forms of discrimination and psychological distress (e.g., Moradi & Subich, 2003; Pieterse & Carter, 2007; Szymanski, 2006) and, more specifically, between experiences of sexism and psychological distress (Fischer & Holz, 2007; Klonoff, Landrine, & Campbell, 2000; Landrine, Klonoff, Gibbs, Manning, & Lund, 1995; Moradi & Funderburk, 2006; Moradi & Subich, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2004; Schmitt, Branscombe, & Postmes, 2003; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, & Ferguson, 2001). Moreover, several variables have been examined as potentially relevant links between perceived sexism and psychological distress (e.g., Fischer & Holz, 2007; Moradi & Subich, 2002; 2004).

One variable proposed to contribute to the psychological distress of discrimination is the internalization of oppressive values, norms, and beliefs by marginalized individuals (e.g., Speight, 2007). Research supports that internalized oppression (e.g., heterosexism, racism, sexism) contributes to negative psychological consequences in samples of African-American women and men, lesbian and bisexual women, and gay men (Meyer, 1995; Szymanski, 2005; Szymanski & Kashubeck-West, 2008; Thomas, Witherspoon, & Speight, 2004; Wester, Vogel, Wei, & McLain, 2006). Additionally, internalized sexism in particular predicted increased psychological distress in samples of bisexual, heterosexual, and lesbian women (Moradi & Subich, 2002; Szymanski & Kashubeck-West, 2008). Finally, research demonstrates that cultural

discrimination predicts internalized oppression (e.g., Hill & Fischer, 2008) and empirical models provide mixed support for internalized oppression as a link between experiences of discrimination and distress (e.g., Meyer, 1995; Moradi & Subich, 2002).

Ambivalent sexism theory (Glick & Fiske, 1996; 1997; 2000) contends that sexist attitudes are characterized by both negative and positive evaluations of women. Two distinct, yet interrelated, forms of sexism—hostile and "benevolent" sexism are proposed. Hostile sexism is overtly negative and represents an adversarial posture toward women who challenge men's power (e.g., feminists, career women), while benevolent sexism is subjectively positive and is characterized by feelings of affection, protection, and idealization toward women who embody conventional gender roles. Research demonstrates that women also hold ambivalently sexist attitudes toward women. In particular, research supports that women may adopt benevolently sexist beliefs in response to environments that are hostile toward women (e.g., Glick et al., 1996; Fischer, 2006). Moreover, women who endorse benevolently sexist attitudes may engage in increased appearance-enhancing behavior (Franzoi, 2001), increased endorsement of Western beauty ideals (Forbes et al., 2007), and experience increased anxiety and fear in intimate heterosexual relationships (Yakushko, 2005).

The role of relational processes in the sexism-distress link has rarely been examined despite counseling psychology's increasing recognition of the saliency of interpersonal variables to individual psychological functioning. Research supports consistent links between relational processes and psychological health (e.g., Frey, Beesley, & Miller, 2006; Jack, 1991; Liang, Tracy, Taylor, Williams, Jordan, & Miller, 2002). Moreover, a restrictive pattern of relational functioning, self-silencing, has been

identified as a partial mediator between perceived sexism and psychological distress (Hurst & Beesley, 2008).

Along with other prominent relational theorists (Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1986), Jack (1991; Jack & Dill, 1992) recognized the centrality of relationships in women's lives and proposed that women are encouraged through gender socialization processes to adopt relational schemas related to how to create and maintain intimate relationships that, in turn, can lead them to silence feelings, thoughts, and actions in important relationships. Self-silencing involves the removal of critical aspects of the self from dialogue for specific relational purposes, namely in an attempt to maintain the relationship (Jack, 1999). Empirical evidence supports that self-silencing demonstrates a consistent relationship with varying factors relevant to psychological health (e.g., Ali & Toner, 2001; Kayser, Sormanti, & Strainchamps, 1999; Piran & Cormier, 2005) and may be an important factor linking psychosocial variables and depression (e.g., Cramer, Gallant, & Langlois, 2005; Thompson, Whiffen, & Aube, 2001).

Statement of the Problem

The present study contributes to research on women's psychological health in three important ways. First, this study adds to a growing body of research examining potential links between perceived sexism and psychological distress. Such research has the potential to expand understanding of women's mental health by identifying clinically relevant processes that may ameliorate or exacerbate women's distress and ultimately inform interventions targeted to women. Second, this study includes a variable (i.e., self-silencing) developed in the spirit of feminist-relational theories of women's development that recognizes the centrality of relationships in women's lives (e.g., Gilligan, 1982; Jack,

1991; Miller, 1986). Third, this study extends a previously tested model supporting self-silencing as a mediator of experiences of sexism and distress (Hurst & Beesley, 2008) by introducing women's internalization of sexism as a potentially salient variable in the sexism-distress link.

The groundwork for the present study is provided by well-established bodies of research emphasizing the relation between perceived sexist events and psychological distress in addition to the role of self-silencing in women's psychological health. It is also informed by emerging research supporting internalization of sexism as a relevant process in the sexism-distress link. Moreover, the proposed model is grounded in relational-cultural theory, which offers a comprehensive framework with which to conceptualize women's experiences of discrimination (e.g., Miller, 1986; Miller & Stiver, 1997; Walker, 2004). Relational-cultural theory recognizes both the saliency and interrelatedness of sociocultural experiences and relational patterns to women's psychological well-being.

The following chapter will present a review of the relevant empirical and theoretical literature supporting the proposed model for the study. More specifically, a broad review of relational-cultural theory and contemporary sexism will be followed by a review of each of the key constructs. The chapter will conclude with evidence to support the proposed relationships among the key variables. Consistent with the theoretical and empirical work reviewed, the purpose of the current study is to examine the relationship between women's perceived experiences of sexism and psychological distress. Additionally, this study will investigate whether internalized sexism and self-silencing mediate the relationship between perceived sexism and distress.

Chapter Two

Review of the Literature

Theoretical Grounding

The proposed model for this project will be developed utilizing the available empirical research and is grounded within a relational-cultural framework of psychological growth and development. Karr and Larson (2005) contend that the generation of new knowledge in counseling psychology is best facilitated by "quantitative empirical research being comprehensively embedded in theories or models" (p. 320). They highlight that theory not only offers researchers organized frameworks for the dynamics that underlie human experience and psychological phenomena, but also helps ensure that a meaningful research question is asked. Alternatively, it has been argued that over-reliance on theory may contribute to confirmation bias, particularly when interpreting findings (Greenwald, Pratkanis, Leippe, & Baumgardner, 1986).

A central tenet of relational-cultural theory (RCT) is that people grow through action in relationships with others (Walker, 2004). *Connection* is conceptualized as the primary vehicle for growth, while isolation or disconnection is considered the primary source of human suffering, resulting in psychological isolation and relational impairment. RCT emphasizes relational movement as fundamental to human growth and development. Relational movement is the "process of moving through connections; through disconnections; and back into new, transformative, and enhanced connections with others" (Comstock et al., 2008, p. 282). Ultimately, movement from disconnection into connection leads to enhanced connection, while disconnections that cannot be transformed have the potential to lead to "condemned isolation", which is characterized

by feelings of shame and disempowerment (Comstock et al.).

Walker (2004) distinguished RCT's conceptualization of connection from conventional definitions, which often describe harmonious, warm, and pleasant interpersonal encounters. Rather, the RCT brand of connection is an active relational process whose fundamental quality is respect. Respect is considered analogous to the concept of unconditional positive regard highlighted in person-centered models (e.g., Rogers, 1989), albeit with an added emphasis on bidirectionality. Importantly, connection founded on mutual respect results in a relationship defined by safety, but not comfort. In fact, Miller (1986) identified conflict as a necessary component of connection. Safety in relationship invites exposure to differences, openness to possibility, and growth through conflict. While such "good conflict" does not necessarily invite comfort, Miller contended that connection necessarily involves the respectful negotiation of difference that ultimately facilitates growth.

In addition to respect, relational-cultural theorists have identified specific processes within relationships that support connection. For example, RCT contends that *mutuality* in relationships is central to psychological growth (Miller & Stiver, 1997). Mutuality represents a "joining together in a shared experience" that creates the potential for all individuals involved to grow from the process (p. 43). It is important to note that mutuality does not equal sameness or equality; rather, it characterizes a way of relating or a shared activity in which the individuals involved are participating as fully as possible. An absence of experienced mutuality may lead to shame, diminished self-esteem, a decreased ability to cope, and depression (Genero, Miller, Surrey, & Baldwin, 1992).

Meaningful connections also involve and promote *authenticity*, which is the

increasing capacity to represent oneself more fully in relationship (Miller & Stiver, 1997; Walker, 2004). Authenticity is not a "tell-all" reaction but instead is characterized by being present and available in relationship. Relational authenticity is nurtured through growth-enhancing relationships in which resonance and response from others is experienced (Miller & Stiver). Conversely, if it has been disconnecting or dangerous to share genuine feelings and thoughts, strategies aimed at hiding these vulnerable but genuine parts of the self are often employed. Ultimately, a lack of authenticity has profound implications for one's ability to genuinely and congruently engage in relationships.

Moreover, RCT purports that dominant societal messages (e.g., discrimination) exert a powerful impact on the construction of, and behavior in, relationships, particularly for members of marginalized groups (Miller, 2002). According to RCT, various forms of cultural oppression, social injustices, and internalized oppression influence marginalized individual's expectations for relationships, particularly with members of the dominant group (Comstock, Hammer, Strentzsch, Cannon, Parsons, & Salazar, 2008). We live in a world that is not constructed on mutuality (Miller & Stiver, 1997). RCT contends that cultures defined by dominant-subordinate institutional structures and relationships based on gender, class, race, sexual identity, and other characteristics have created a nonmutual model that permeates all relationships.

Additionally, the proliferation of cultural *controlling images*, a term borrowed from sociologist Patricia Hill Collins (2000), enacts a salient influence on relational identity and functioning. Controlling images are culturally constructed "stories" about groups and individuals that communicate how they are regarded by others and ultimately

define who they are and are not within a cultural context (Miller, 2002). Although they are false, controlling images essentially function to hold people in their place and to protect and justify existing sociocultural power structures. For example, the narrow and rigid roles to which women have historically been assigned (e.g., the good mother, the temptress, the virgin, the whore) not only fail to capture the complexity of what it means to be a woman (Brabeck & Ting, 2000), but also reinforce traditional and devalued roles for women. Walker (2004) suggested that controlling images function similarly to stereotypes in that they are used to justify particular patterns or ways of relating.

According to RCT, controlling images are inextricably linked to *relational images*, or how we perceive ourselves in relation to others (Walker, 2004). Controlling images frame the world in which people form the relationships that ultimately result in the construction of relational images (Miller, 2002). These relational images, in turn, form a framework through which meaning is created, expectations are formed, and relational worth is established. Essentially, relational images, which are often carried and enacted without awareness, provide an inner working template for how one must be or what one must do in order to maintain relational connection (Miller & Stiver, 1997; Walker, 2004). Problematic or restrictive relational images, which often involve strategies aimed at keeping large parts of oneself out of the relationship, ultimately result in isolation, powerlessness, and distress (Miller & Stiver).

RCT offers a comprehensive framework from which to examine women's experience of distress as potentially reflective of a dynamic interplay between larger, sociocultural experiences of sexism and relational functioning. The following review of key constructs and their proposed associations are ultimately informed by the theory and

the available research evidence. As a starting point, it might be useful to review the current state of sexism in society.

Sexism in Contemporary Society

In general, the current status of women reflects positive changes across many societies. In the United States over the past century, women have gained the right to vote, made significant advances in education, and received protection in the workplace from the enactment of more progressive gender discrimination laws (Swim & Campbell, 2001). However, women are also much more likely to live in poverty than men in nearly every nation in the world including the United States and remain susceptible to physical and sexual abuse at alarming rates (Lipps, 1999). Moreover, in the workplace women are over-represented in traditionally "female" occupations (e.g., child care workers, administrative assistants, teachers, and nurses) and receive less compensation for their work than men (Betz, 2005).

There are highly divergent perspectives and opinions related to the pervasiveness of gender inequality in contemporary society. With respect to current shifts in scholarly efforts to define and capture sexism, Swim and Campbell (2001) stated:

> …beliefs about the extent of gender inequality are likely a function of conceptual boundaries placed on attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors typically considered to be evidence of sexism. Narrower conceptualizations of sexism will likely lead to impressions that sexism is less of a problem than would more inclusive conceptualizations. A noteworthy theme in current psychological research on sexism has been the refinement and broadening of the construct. (p. 219)

Indeed, conceptualizations of sexism are no longer limited to overt or traditional forms of sexism, but rather have expanded to capture more subtle and modern variations (e.g., Glick & Fiske, 1996; Swim, Aiken, Hall, & Hunter, 1995; Tougas, Brown, Beaton, & Joly, 1995).

Swim et al. (1995) describe the measurement of prejudicial beliefs, including racism and sexism, as an "increasingly elusive task." (p. 199). One potential explanation for this difficulty is the growing presence of normative pressures not to endorse blatantly prejudicial statements. As social policies and intergroup relations have changed in contemporary society, so too has the manner in which prejudice is manifested (Masser & Abrams, 1999; Tougas et al., 1995). Benokraitis and Feagin (1995) contended that declines in overt sexism do not necessarily equal declines in either sexist beliefs or sexist behaviors. In fact, they argued that the more traditional and overt form of sexism has been replaced with a more covert, but equally pernicious, brand. Modern forms of sexism have been conceptualized as the denial of continuing discrimination against women, antagonism toward women's demands, and resentment toward "special favors" for women (Swim et al., 1995). Additionally, the modern expression of sexism has been modified to take into account current egalitarian values and has also been defined as a "manifestation of a conflict between egalitarian values and residual negative feelings toward women" (Tougas, et al., 1995, p. 843). Finally, Glick and Fiske (1996) have posited a brand of subtle sexism (i.e., benevolent sexism) that involves feelings of protectiveness and affection toward women, but is ultimately based on women's perceived inferiority and inadequacy.

The difficulty in conceptualizing and empirically testing sexism is also evident in popular definitions of the construct. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines sexism as "prejudice or discrimination based on sex; *especially* discrimination against women" and as the "behavior, conditions, or attitudes that foster stereotypes of social roles based on sex" (2008). Swim and Campbell (2001) highlighted that broad definitions of the term have contributed to confusion related to the study of sexism. For example, they noted that researchers may actually be assessing gender roles, but instead label a variable, "attitudes toward women." Swim and Campbell settled on a conceptualization of sexism as the "attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors that support the unequal status of women and men." (p. 219), offering a more comprehensive definition that emphasizes inequity based on gender as the resulting impact.

Perceived Sexist Discrimination

One line of sexism research aims to examine the negative impact of sexist discrimination on women's physical and mental health. Klonoff and Landrine (1995) developed the Schedule of Sexist Events (SSE) to facilitate empirical investigation of the prevalence and impact of discrimination in women's lives. They conceptualized sexist events as gender-specific, negative life stressors that are akin to generic life stressors investigated in well-established lines of stress and coping research (e.g., Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Consistent with the measurement of other stressful life events, sexist events can occur frequently or infrequently and may be conceptualized as acute (occurring over the past year) or chronic (occurring across a lifetime).

Klonoff and Landrine (1995) conceptualized sexist discrimination as multifaceted and consisting of various sexist events occurring across multiple domains of experience.

Moreover, sexist events are considered gender-specific stressors that "happen *to women because they are women*" (p. 441). More specifically, sexist events include being sexually harassed; being treated unfairly by family members, spouses/partners, and teachers/professors; being called sexist names such as "bitch" or "chick"; being discriminated against by people in various professions, strangers (e.g., who ignore one's presence, fail to yield space, or behave in a hostile manner), institutions (e.g., banks and schools), and neighbors; being perceived as "aggressive" or "uppity" for normal, assertive behavior; and being discriminated against at work in salaries, promotions, and assignments, as well as by one's colleagues. Sexist events are considered widespread in women's lives and are believed to have a greater impact on women's physical and mental health than more general life stressors because they are highly personal and target an essential quality of the self (i.e., sex) that cannot be changed (Landrine & Klonoff, 1997).

The literature supports the pervasiveness of perceived sexist events with women and girls reporting experiencing sexism in various forms, including discrimination, harassment, sexual assault, and physical assault (e.g., Berg, 2006; Fischer & Holz, 2007; Klonoff & Landrine, 1995; Landrine, Klonoff, Gibbs, Manning, & Lund, 1995; Leaper & Brown, 2008; Moradi & Subich, 2002). Leaper and Brown found that 90% of girls ages 12 through 18 reported sexual harassment, while 76% reported sexism in athletic domains and 52% in academic domains. Additionally, Klonoff and Landrine found that 99% of women in a large, diverse sample had experienced some form of sexist discrimination during their lifetimes.

Perceived Sexism and Psychological Distress

Research has provided empirical support for links between various forms of

discrimination (e.g., heterosexism, racism, and sexism) and psychological distress (e.g., Moradi & Subich, 2003; Pieterse & Carter, 2007; Szymanski, 2006). Likewise, existing research supports a positive relation between perceived sexist events and psychological distress. For example, Landrine et al. (1995) reported that both recent and lifetime perceived sexist events were related to general psychological symptoms, obsessive-compulsivity, interpersonal sensitivity, anxiety, and premenstrual symptoms above and beyond daily hassles and general stressful life events. Additionally, in this sample of community and university women, recent sexist events were related to depressive symptoms and lifetime sexist events were related to somatic symptoms above and beyond other generic stressful events.

Moreover, Swim et al. (2001) provided evidence for a prospective link between perceived sexism and psychological distress in a two-week diary study in a sample of undergraduate women and men. Women reported experiencing significantly more sexist events than men. These events included traditional gender role stereotypes and prejudice, demeaning and degrading comments, and sexual objectification. The number of reported sexist events predicted anger, anxiety, and social state self-esteem beyond pretest measures of negative affect, state self-esteem, feminist beliefs, and feeling threatened by the possibility of being stereotyped. Likewise, Schmitt et al. (2003) provided further evidence of a predictive link between experiences of perceived gender discrimination and psychological consequences. In their sample of undergraduate women, decreased self-esteem and negative affect were observed after exposure to a vignette and experimental condition suggesting pervasive gender discrimination. These findings support the contention that experiences of sexism contribute in a predictive manner to distress.

Moreover, Klonoff et al. (2000) argued that women's experiences of sexism might explain gender differences in psychological symptom patterns. Beginning in adolescence and persisting into adulthood, girls and women report significantly higher rates of depression (e.g., Nolen-Hoeksema, 2001) and eating disorders (e.g., Hudson, Hiripi, Pope, & Kessler, 2007; Striegel-Moore & Cachelin, 2001) in addition to most forms of diagnosable mood and anxiety disorders (see Eriksen & Kress, 2008 for a review). The sociocultural experience of women, characterized by devaluing and discrimination, has been proposed as one explanation for why women demonstrate increased psychological symptomatology characteristic of these disorders (Landrine & Klonoff, 1997).

The research seems to support this proposition. In a sample of college students, women who reported experiencing more frequent sexist events also reported higher levels of depressive, anxious, and somatic symptoms than men (Klonoff et al., 2000). However, those who reported less frequent perceived sexist events did not differ from men in psychological symptomatology. These findings support that experiences of sexism are unique from other forms of stress and may contribute to women's increased experiences of psychological distress. More recently, Dambrun (2007) empirically supported a model in which gender differences in subjective distress were mediated by perceived personal discrimination (but not group discrimination) and concluded that perceived discrimination is a key variable in explaining gender differences in mental health.

At the time of the development of the SSE, Klonoff and Landrine (1995) hypothesized that highly variable coping styles and skills (e.g., social support, personality factors) would likely mediate the negative impact of sexist events, much in the same

manner as with generic life stressors. Accordingly, a more recent extension of research examining perceived sexism and psychological distress has explored potentially salient links between these variables. For example, Moradi and Subich (2002) examined lifetime and recent sexist events, feminist identity development attitudes, and distress in a sample of female university students, faculty, and staff. Frequency of perceived sexist events within the past year accounted for unique variance in psychological distress beyond that accounted for by demographic variables, social desirability, feminist identity development, and lifetime sexist events. This finding is consistent with Landrine et al.'s (1995) conceptualization of lifetime sexist events as a distal predictor and recent sexist events as a proximal predictor of women's distress.

More recently, Hurst and Beesley (2008) found a significant sexism-distress link with self-silencing partially mediating the relationship between reported lifetime sexist events and psychological distress in a sample of college women. These findings were also consistent with conceptualizations of recent sexist events as proximal predictors and lifetime sexist events as distal predictors of psychological symptoms (Klonoff & Landrine, 1995; Landrine et al., 1995). The mediating effect of self-silencing between sexist events occurring over a lifetime and psychological distress suggests that lifetime sexism may *set the stage* for the development of problematic relational strategies (i.e., self-silencing), which then become proximal predictors of psychological distress. Furthermore, the absence of such a mediating effect between sexist events occurring in the past year and distress may suggest a more direct link between recent sexism and psychological distress.

Additionally, Moradi and Subich (2004) reported that both the frequency and

appraisal of perceived sexist events, self-esteem, and the interaction of these variables contributed to psychological distress in a sample of university women. In a similar vein, Moradi and Funderburk (2006) found a significant sexism-distress link in the context of an additional significant indirect relation between perceived social support and psychological distress, mediated through empowerment in a sample of women seeking mental health services. Finally, in a sample of undergraduate women, Fischer and Holz (2007) provided evidence for a direct effect of perceived sexist events on both depression and anxiety in addition to a partially mediated effect through group and personal self-esteem variables.

Empirical research supports that the frequency of perceived sexist events is linked consistently with distress across samples of undergraduate students, college faculty and staff, community women, and women seeking mental health services. Moreover, the existing research supports that experiences of sexism may contribute to gender differences in psychological symptom patterns. Finally, more recent extensions to this body of research have identified important variables linking perceived sexist events and psychological distress, including a recent study (Hurst & Beesley, 2008) supporting a key relational construct examined in the current study, self-silencing, as a mediator between chronic sexism and distress.

Internalized Sexism

An emerging line of research is examining the impact of internalized oppression (e.g., heterosexism, racism, sexism) on the psychological health of individuals who are members of marginalized groups. Speight (2007) contended that "the institutionalization and normalization of oppression in daily life necessarily involve the internalization of the

dominant group's values, norms, and ideas" (p. 130). Moreover, internalized oppression not only results in self-deprecation for individuals of the subordinate group, but also serves both a domesticating and self-sustaining function (Freire, 2003). When marginalized individuals accept the dominant group's version of reality, not only are they left feeling inferior, they are also no longer independently defining themselves.

Speight (2007) argued that internalized racism may be the most damaging psychological consequence of racism. As support, she cited Steele and Aronson's (1995) compelling findings that African Americans who were aware of stereotypes related to their intellectual inferiority demonstrated decreased performance on measures of intelligence. Likewise, results from a meta-analysis of the findings from experimental investigations of stereotype threat suggested that women and racial minority test takers perform more poorly on cognitive tests than those who are not exposed to threat (Nguyen & Ryan, 2008). Additionally, women exposed to a seemingly innocuous brand of sexism demonstrated decreased performance on cognitive tasks (Dardenne, Dumont, & Bollier, 2007). Collectively, this research supports the notion that oppressive ideologies can have an insidious impact on "objective" measures of performance.

Research also suggests that internalized oppression negatively impacts psychological health. For example, internalized racial stereotypes were negatively associated with self-esteem in a sample of African-American women (Thomas, Witherspoon, & Speight, 2004). Additionally, a racial identity attitude reflective of internalized racism (i.e., self-hatred) predicted increased psychological distress in a sample of African-American men (Wester, Vogel, Wei, & McLain, 2006). Finally, internalized heterosexism predicted increased psychological distress in a sample of gay

men (Meyer, 1995) and in samples of lesbian and bisexual women (Szymanski, 2005; Szymanski & Kashubeck-West, 2008).

The impact of internalizing sexist ideologies has also been examined empirically. Internalized sexism, assessed using the Passive Acceptance scale of the Feminist Identity Development Scale (FIDS; Bargad & Hyde, 1991), predicted increased psychological distress in a sample of college students, faculty, and staff (Moradi & Subich, 2002). The Passive Acceptance stage of the Feminist Identity Development Model is characterized by the denial of individual, cultural, and institutional discrimination against women (Downing & Roush, 1985). Moreover, Szymanski & Kashubeck-West (2008) found that internalized sexism, along with internalized heterosexism, predicted psychological distress in a sample of lesbian and bisexual women. In this study, internalized sexism was assessed using the Internalized Misogyny Scale (IMS; Piggot, 2004 as cited in Szymanski & Kashubeck-West), which measures devaluing and distrust of women, in addition to gender bias in favor of men.

Research also supports that cultural experiences of discrimination are associated with increased internalized oppression. For example, Hill and Fischer (2008) found that women's experience of cultural objectification was significantly related to their own self-objectification. In this sample of community bisexual, heterosexual, and lesbian women, being treated like a sexual object (i.e., experiences of being gazed at, evaluated, and harassed) predicted the tendency to view their own bodies in observable, appearance-based terms. Likewise, undergraduate women exposed to thin-idealized media images experienced increased self-objectification (Harper & Tiggeman, 2008). A growing body of research suggests that self-objectification is related to negative psychological

consequences, including depression, disordered eating, and decreased well-being, for women (e.g., Breines, Crocker, & Garcia, 2008; Tiggeman & Kuring, 2004).

Empirical findings provide preliminary support for internalization of cultural oppression as a link between experiences of discrimination and psychological distress. The internalization of heterosexist beliefs has been found to moderate the relationship between heterosexist experiences and psychological distress for gay men but not for lesbians (Meyer, 1995; Szymanski, 2006). Moreover, Moradi and Subich (2002) demonstrated that the denial of sexism moderated the relationship between perceived sexist events and psychological distress, although the interaction accounted for only 1% of the variance. Although the results from these studies are certainly not conclusive, they suggest that continued examination of internalized oppression as a potentially salient link between discrimination and distress is warranted.

Finally, evidence suggests that certain variables may impact the relationship between internalized oppression and distress. For example, Szymanski and Kashubeck-West (2008) demonstrated that self-esteem and social support fully mediated the relationship between internalized heterosexism and psychological distress in lesbian and bisexual women. Moreover, social support fully mediated the relationship between internalized sexism and distress. These findings lend support to the theoretical contention (e.g., Miller & Stiver, 1997) that relational variables may be important in women's psychological experiences of discrimination.

Ambivalent Sexism

While many contemporary definitions of sexist beliefs highlight hostility or negative feelings toward women (e.g., Swim et al., 1995, Tougas et al.,1995), Glick and

Fiske (1996; 1997; 2003) contend that sexist attitudes are characterized by both negative *and* positive evaluations of women. They suggested a reconceptualization of the nature and measurement of sexism that recognizes it as a multidimensional construct that is characterized by both subjectively hostile and benevolent feelings toward women. Accordingly, they proposed two distinct, yet interrelated, forms of sexism—hostile and "benevolent" sexism—as complementary "legitimizing ideologies" or beliefs that justify and maintain inequality between women and men (Glick & Fiske, 2003).

Simply put, hostile sexism (HS) justifies patriarchy by denigrating women in an overtly negative manner. It is consistent with classic conceptualizations of prejudice (e.g., Allport, 1954) that highlight hostility and negativity toward the target group, as well as traditional forms of sexism that emphasize negative feelings toward, and stereotypes about, women (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Moreover, HS represents an adversarial posture toward gender relations in which women are perceived as seeking to control men through sexuality or feminist ideology (Glick & Fiske, 2000).

"Benevolent" sexism (BS), on the other hand, is a subjectively positive orientation that may be characterized by feelings of affection, protection, and even idealization toward women who embrace conventional gender roles (Glick & Fiske, 2000). Glick and Fiske (1996) define BS as "a set of interrelated attitudes toward women that are sexist in terms of viewing women stereotypically and in restricted roles that are subjectively positive in feeling tone (for the perceiver) and also tend to elicit behaviors typically categorized as prosocial (e.g., helping) or intimacy-seeking (e.g., self-disclosure)" (p. 491). While BS involves positive feelings, its motives and behaviors are ultimately predicated on a belief in women's inferior status, and its attitudes reinforce and

perpetuate gender inequality.

Most classic psychological theories of prejudice have emphasized antipathy toward the targeted group (e.g., Allport, 1954). However, in the case of sexism, women and men's interdependence in society foster intergroup attitudes that are not purely hostile. While men hold structural power in most Western societies, heterosexual intimate relationships and sexual reproduction lend women dyadic power (Glick & Fiske, 1997). Although ethnic and racial groups can choose to avoid close interpersonal relations across group lines, women and men are largely interdependent, thereby affording women power related to men's reliance on them in interpersonal relationships. The simultaneous existence of male structural power and female dyadic power supports ambivalently sexist ideologies (Glick & Fiske, 1996).

The proposed coexistence of both positive and negative affect toward women as a subordinate group is similar to that proposed in the theory of ambivalent racism (Katz, Wackenhut, & Hass, 1986). Moreover, Glick and Fiske (1996) highlighted that ambivalent sexism functions analogously to a colonial ideology:

> Hostile sexist beliefs in women's incompetence at agentic tasks characterize women as unfit to wield power over economic, legal, and political institutions, whereas benevolent sexism provides a comfortable rationalization for confining women to domestic roles. Similar ideologies (e.g., the "White man's burden") have been used in the past to justify colonialism and slavery…Like hostile and benevolent sexism, these ideologies combine notions of the exploited group's lack of competence to exercise structural power with self-serving "benevolent" justifications (e.g., "We must bear the burden of taking care of them") that allow

> members of the dominant group to view their actions as not being exploitative. Thus, benevolent sexism may be used to compensate for, or legitimate, hostile sexism ("I am not exploiting women; I love, protect, and provide for them"). (p. 492)

As this example illustrates, although HS and BS take on distinctly different tones, they are purported to coexist and, in fact, complement one another in supporting women's inferior status in society.

Empirical research supports that that BS and HS are in fact interrelated, complementary ideologies. In factor analyses of the 22-item Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI, Glick & Fiske, 1996), a self-report measure of sexist attitudes, BS and HS emerge as separate but positively correlated factors in both U.S. and cross-cultural samples (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Glick et al., 2000). When the correlation between BS and HS are controlled statistically, HS predicts negative and BS predicts positive stereotypes about, and attitudes toward, women (Glick et al., 1997; Glick & Fiske, 1996).

Moreover, the theory of ambivalent sexism purports that together HS and BS act as a complementary system of punishment and reward that supports a system of gender inequality (Glick & Fiske, 1999). Glick et al. contended that increasing gender equality in a modern context threatens traditional male dominance. Subsequently, HS may be directed most strongly at women who challenge men's power (e.g., feminists) and status (e.g., career women) as well as women perceived to use sexuality to gain power over men (e.g., temptresses). While the function of HS is to punish women who do not adhere to traditional gender roles, the protection and affection of BS are offered as rewards for conforming to traditional roles.

Glick et al. (1997) hypothesized that ambivalently sexist men avoid experiencing dissonance related to holding both highly favorable and highly unfavorable attitudes toward women by "splitting" women into good and bad subgroups that embody the positive and negative aspects of sexist ambivalence. Such extreme female subtypes have been referred to throughout feminist literature. For example, Tavris and Wade (1984) coined one such polarized dichotomy the "Madonna/Whore" distinction in which women are metaphorically placed either on a pedestal or in the gutter.

Research supports the conceptualization that hostility is reserved for women who are considered sexually promiscuous, while benevolence is associated with sexual purity and traditional gender role conformity. For example, in a sample of college students, men expressed increased HS, but decreased BS, toward a female target presented as sexually promiscuous. At the same time, they expressed increased BS, but decreased HS, toward a female target presented as chaste and sexually pure (Sibley & Wilson, 2004). Alternatively, baseline BS attitudes among Turkish female and male participants predicted more negative attitudes toward women who engage in premarital sex (Sakalli-Urgulu & Glick, 2003).

Additionally, research suggests that hostility tends to be directed toward women in nontraditional professional roles, particularly those perceived to be more "masculine" in nature or those that threaten existing male power, while benevolence is reserved for women who conform to traditional gender roles. In a sample of college men, Glick et al. (1997) reported that HS was correlated with negative evaluations of women in a nontraditional female subtype (i.e., "career woman"), while BS was correlated with positive evaluations of women in a traditional role (i.e., "homemaker"). Moreover, in a

mixed-gender community sample, Masser and Abrams (2004) found that HS was related to both negative evaluations and lower employment recommendations for a female candidate applying for a managerial position. Additionally, HS was associated with higher recommendation for employment for a male candidate applying for the same position. Research also supports that women and men's endorsement of HS predicts reactions to women's promotion opportunities in the workplace (Feather & Boeckmann, 2007). More specifically, with respect to women's professional mobility, HS beliefs were associated with the denial that men are unfairly advantaged in the workplace, blame toward women for men's disadvantage, and the belief that women should feel guilty for their own unfair advantage.

Another line of research has examined potential predictors and correlates of ambivalently sexist ideologies. Christopher and Mull (2006) examined the relationship between conservative ideology and ambivalent sexism in a mixed-gender community sample. As predicted, social dominance orientation (SDO), which is characterized by a tendency to derogate members of out-groups who are actual or perceived competitors, and protestant work ethic (PWE), which is characterized by prejudice against those perceived as failing to work hard, both predicted HS. Alternatively, Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA), which is characterized by prejudice against in-group members who violate traditional values, predicted BS. Moreover, results from a longitudinal study of college men indicated that RWA predicted increases in BS over time, while SDO predicted increases in HS over time (Sibley, Wilson, & Duckitt, 2007).

Moreover, Feather (2004) examined associations between ambivalent sexism and individual value priorities in a mixed-gender, Australian college student sample. For men,

HS and BS were negatively correlated with self-direction and universalism values. Additionally, HS was positively correlated with power, while BS was positively correlated with tradition and conformity values. For women, both HS and BS were negatively correlated with universalism and benevolence values and positively correlated with power. Additionally, BS was positively correlated with valuing tradition in female participants.

In addition to conservative ideologies and personal values, there is also empirical support for educational and religious correlates of ambivalent sexism. In a Spanish community sample, educational attainment was associated with lower HS and BS attitudes, while Catholic religiosity predicted more BS, but not HS, attitudes in women and men (Glick, Lameiras, & Castro, 2002). Additionally, intrinsic religiosity, extrinsic religiosity, and scriptural literalism were positively associated with BS, but not HS, in a mixed-gender college student sample (Burn & Busso, 2005). Overall, empirical work suggests that several individual variables, including conservative ideology, personal values, religiosity, and educational experiences are relevant to the endorsement of ambivalent sexism.

Another body of research suggests that ambivalent sexism is associated with various attitudes related to sexual and physical aggression toward women. HS and BS toward women are associated with a range of attitudes about rape, including rape myth acceptance, victim blaming, and reduced rapist blaming (e.g., Abrams, Viki, Masser, & Bohner, 2003; Chapleau, Oswald, & Russell, 2007; Sakalli-Urgulu et al., 2007; Viki & Abrams, 2002). Moreover, in a college student sample, HS was associated with dating aggression and sexual coercion for men, but not for women (Forbes, Adams-Curtis, &

White, 2004). Additionally, ambivalent sexism, particularly HS, accounted for over 35% of the variance in predicting tolerance of sexual harassment, which was significantly more than participant gender, social dominance orientation, benevolence, nonsexist beliefs, and gender role orientation (Russell & Trigg, 2004). Finally, in college and community samples from Brazil and Turkey, HS attitudes toward women most strongly predicted attitudes that legitimate wife abuse for both women and men (Glick, Sakalli-Urgulu, Ferreira, & de Souza, 2002). Alternatively, BS was correlated with attitudes that legitimate abuse, but did not uniquely predict abuse attitudes once its relationship with HS was controlled. These results suggest that although BS may not be the driving force behind attitudes that legitimate abuse, it also does not seem to protect "disobedient" women (e.g., women who challenge their husbands' authority) from abuse.

Collectively the reviewed research suggests that women and men holding ambivalently sexist attitudes toward women may not respond similarly to female targets or to sexist situations. Additionally, Greenwood and Isbell (2002) found that male and female college students high in HS responded similarly to sexist humor (i.e., a dumb blonde joke) by rating the jokes as more amusing and less offensive than those low in HS. However, men high in BS found the jokes more amusing and less offensive than women high in BS. Observed gender differences in the endorsement of ambivalent sexism toward women suggest that the development and impact of such attitudes may vary as a function of gender.

In particular, women's unique position of endorsing sexist attitudes against other women may distinctly impact their experience relative to men who endorse sexist attitudes against women. For example, in a study examining the role of ambivalent

sexism and perceptions of menstruating women, HS predicted negative perceptions of menstruating women for both undergraduate women and men (Forbes, Adams-Curtis, White, & Holmgren, 2003). Consistent with previous research, men endorsed HS and negative perceptions of menstruating women at significantly higher levels than women. However, women higher in BS perceived menstruating women as less "feminine." The authors purported that this finding reflects an idealized stereotype of feminine purity and cleanliness reflected in a BS ideology. This finding also begs the question of how holding ambivalently sexist ideologies toward their own group impact the self-concept of individual women.

Women and Ambivalent Sexism

Although the theory of ambivalent sexism was originally developed with attention to men's attitudes toward women, the literature demonstrates that women also hold hostile and benevolent attitudes toward women. Factor structures of the HS and BS subscales of the ASI are the same for women and men, suggesting that sexism toward women is culturally conveyed to men and women alike (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Glick et al., 2000). However, a substantial body of research suggests that women and men do not endorse sexism to the same degree.

Even though cross-cultural data indicate that at a national level men's level of sexism predicts women's scores on both HS and BS (Glick et al., 2000), a more comprehensive examination of gender patterns across studies suggests that women may be more likely to endorse a benevolent ideology in response to sexist hostility. In cross-cultural and U.S. mixed-gender samples, women's levels of both BS and HS have typically been lower than men's (e.g., Feather & Boeckmann, 2007; Fernandez, Castro, &

Lorenzo, 2004; Glick et al.; Glick & Fiske, 1996; Masser & Abrams, 1999). However, the gender difference between scores on BS has consistently been smaller (e.g., Campbell et al., 1997; Masser & Abrams). In their cross-cultural study, Glick et al. found that women across 19 nations were more likely to endorse BS than HS, particularly in countries with higher levels of general sexism, which was determined utilizing United Nations indices of gender equality. In fact, in four nations with the highest mean sexism scores (i.e., Botswana, Cuba, Nigeria, and South Africa), women endorsed BS significantly more than men did. The authors posited that women, relative to men, accepted BS more than HS as a "self-defense" response in cultures characterized by high levels of sexism. Consistent with Glick et al., Yakushko (2005) found that in Ukraine, a country characterized as experiencing "aggressive remasculization" in its recent transition from socialism to capitalism, women endorsed BS at levels significantly higher than men. In the face of increased hostility from the dominant group, it is not surprising that women adopt traditionally prescribed roles and the ideology that supports them.

In a related vein, Fischer (2006) utilized experimental methods to test the hypothesis that women's BS attitudes are a self-protective response to environments they perceive as hostile to women. As predicted, BS attitudes were strongest for women exposed to information suggesting that men hold negative attitudes toward women (as opposed to participants exposed to information suggesting that men hold positive attitudes toward women or to no information at all). Moreover, this relationship remained significant after controlling for attitudes toward feminism. Importantly, HS attitudes were not predicted by men's attitudes toward women. In this U.S. sample of undergraduate women, participants did not adopt hostile attitudes toward women in

response to men's negative attitudes. Fischer conceptualized the endorsement of BS attitudes as a "strategy of defiance" in the face of environmental hostility that allows women to protect self- and group-esteem. However, such responses ultimately reinforce existing systems of inequality.

Collectively, these findings suggest that Jost and Banaji's (1994) system-justification perspective, which posits that members of subordinate groups are often complicit in their own subordination, may be largely relevant to women's acceptance of BS—rather than their acceptance of HS. In short, women may be less willing to openly accept and endorse hostilely sexist ideologies. In fact, research has supported that when exposed to vignettes describing hostilely and benevolently sexist men, women respond more favorably to BS, while simultaneously disapproving of HS (Kilianski & Rudman, 1998).

Also consistent with a system-justification perspective, Jost and Kay (2005) contended that the complementary nature of gender stereotypes contributes to support for the status quo. More specifically, they proposed that communal and benevolent stereotypes about women "serve system-justifying ends by counterbalancing men's presumed advantages in terms of agency and status" (p. 499). System-justification theory purports that holding an egalitarian belief that every group in society has some advantages and disadvantages increases the general sense that the system as a whole is fair and balanced. Research supports that holding a belief in a just world is positively correlated with both HS and BS in women and men (Sakalli-Ugurlu, Yalcin, & Glick, 2007). Moreover, women were more likely to support the status quo in response to stereotypes about women that were benevolent, communal, or complimentary

(benevolent and hostile) in nature (Jost & Kay). Presumably, this reflects women's conceptualization of the system as fair when they consider traditionally feminine qualities as complementary and equal to traditionally masculine qualities.

Glick and Fiske (2000) contended that BS may be a particularly insidious form of prejudice. Because it is not experienced as antipathetic toward women, it does not feel like prejudice to its perpetrators. Additionally, women may find its subjectively positive tone appealing (Glick & Fiske, 2003). Not only is BS favorable in its characterization of women, but it also promises that men's power will be used to women's advantage. In her comprehensive analysis of persuasion and inequality in intergroup relations, Jackman (1994) identified benevolent ideologies as essential in the maintenance of the status quo and contended that subordination and affection often go hand-in-hand:

> With affection comes the ability of those in command to shape the needs and aspirations of subordinates and to portray discriminatory arrangements as being in the best interests of all concerned. Conflict is obviated because those who must initiate it—the have-not's—are bound emotionally and cognitively in a framework that is of the dominant group's definition. Far from their domination over subordinates, the expression of affection for subordinates thus strengthens the dominant group's control. (p. 15)

Although they are characterized by positive feelings, benevolent ideologies are hypothesized to ultimately serve a dual purpose—(a) to soothe the conscience of the dominant group by maintaining that the subordinate group could not survive without them and (b) to serve as a more pleasant means of coercing cooperation from the subordinate group (Glick & Fiske, 1997).

Moreover, compelling empirical support suggests that benevolent sexism may function as an efficient system-justifying tool that negatively impacts women's performance on "objective" measures like cognitive tasks. Utilizing experimental methodology across four samples of Belgian women with varying levels of educational attainment, this study illuminated the consequences of hostile and benevolent sexism on women's cognitive performance (Dardenne, Dumont, & Bollier, 2007). More specifically, women's experience of BS, rather than HS, had a deleterious impact on women's performance. Additionally, although BS was not readily identified as sexism by female participants, it generated more disturbing mental intrusions (e.g., preoccupation, self-doubt, decreased self-esteem), which, in turn, impaired cognitive capacity for the task at hand and lowered performance. Conversely, HS was accurately detected as prejudice and did not undermine performance. The authors argued that it is the insidious nature of BS, in particular, that accounts for its negative impact. Alternatively, the overt and aggressive nature of HS may have facilitated external attribution or blame toward the perpetrator and subsequently did not impair the women's performance. This study provided empirical evidence for the effectiveness of benevolent attitudes, over hostile attitudes, in maintaining systematic gender inequalities through women's decreased performance on a seemingly "objective" cognitive task.

Additionally, recent research also suggests that women's endorsement of BS disarms resistance to, and ultimately increases endorsement of, HS toward women (Sibley, Overall, & Duckitt, 2007). This longitudinal study demonstrated that women's endorsement of BS reliably predicted endorsement of HS over 6- and 12-month time periods. However, this trend was true only for women who scored highly in Right-Wing

Authoritarianism (RWA), which is a personality style characterized by a high degree of submission to authority, aggressiveness toward out-groups, and adherence to societal conventions (Altemeyer, 1981). These findings suggest that endorsement of BS in women high in RWA may lead to hostile views toward women who violate patriarchal norms (e.g., feminists) and, by doing so, threaten the overall security of the social system. Moreover, research supports that women who endorse BS at higher levels are also more likely to endorse greater levels of HS (e.g., Franzoi, 2001; Glick & Fiske, 1996).

Another line of research has examined the psychosocial impact of women holding ambivalently sexist attitudes toward women. Research also supports that the social rewards related to BS may partially motivate appearance-enhancing behavior in women. Franzoi (2001) found that undergraduate women who held increased BS beliefs reported using more cosmetics when preparing for a romantic date in addition to holding more positive attitudes toward a dimension of body esteem (i.e., sexual attractiveness) that is enhanced through cosmetic use and grooming. Alternatively, HS was negatively correlated with sexual attractiveness. Accordingly, BS was associated with greater acceptance and use of cosmetics in a Polish college student sample, while HS was related to decreased cosmetic use (Forbes, Doroszewicz, Card, & Adams-Curtis, 2004). However, similar relationships were not supported in the U.S. sample of college women. These findings provide mixed support for the hypothesis that women high in BS seek to conform to cultural standards of traditional female attractiveness.

In a related vein, studies examining the relationship between women's endorsement of ambivalent sexism and variables of body satisfaction have yielded mixed results. Contrary to hypotheses that women high in BS would be more susceptible to

cultural prescriptions related to thinness, BS predicted greater body satisfaction and larger body ideals in a sample of U.S. college women and their mothers (Forbes, Adams-Curtis, Jobe, White, Revak, Zivcic-Becirevic, & Pokrajac-Bulian, 2005). The authors speculated that these unanticipated results may reflect a benevolently sexist ideology that supports more traditional physical markers of female fecundity (e.g., larger hips, breasts, and abdominal fat) and "bodies that are more voluptuous and unequivocally female than the gaunt, tube-like or boyish bodies represented by the thin body ideal" (p. 295). In another study, college women higher in HS reported greater dissatisfaction with their bodies (Forbes et al., 2004). However, no relationships were found between BS and body satisfaction measures. Finally, HS, and to a lesser extent BS, were associated with endorsement of Western beauty ideals (e.g., importance of beauty, importance of thinness) in a mixed-gender college student sample (Forbes, Collingsworth, Jobe, Braun, & Wise, 2007).

In addition to implications related to adherence to dominant cultural standards of beauty, women's endorsement of benevolent and hostile ideologies has been linked with relational patterns in a sample of college women and young professionals in Ukraine (Yakushko, 2005). More specifically, higher BS toward women was associated with stronger fears about being intimate in relationships. Additionally, women with higher BS and HS toward women reported feeling more uncertain or anxious about being in relationships with men. These findings suggest that ambivalent sexism toward women may have important implications for relational functioning in women.

Research supports that BS and HS are complementary ideologies that differentially reinforce and punish traditional and nontraditional gender roles and

behavior in women. Moreover, experimental and correlational evidence suggests that women may adopt sexist ideologies against women, particularly benevolent ideologies, in response to environments that are sexist toward women. While women seem more likely to respond favorably to BS, they may also be subject to its negative impact (e.g., decreased cognitive performance). Additionally, research suggests that endorsing ambivalent sexist attitudes toward women have distinct implications for the women who hold them. Namely, empirical evidence demonstrates that holding ambivalent attitudes toward women may influence conformity to cultural standards of beauty, body satisfaction, and relational functioning.

Self-Silencing

Relational theories recognize the centrality of women's relationships to psychological development and suggest that gender socialization processes encourage girls and women to define their sense of self through relationships with others (Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1986). Likewise, Jack's (1991, Jack & Dill, 1992) self-silencing model is based on the contention that relationships are of central importance to women and also subject to the influence of larger sociocultural messages related to gender. She proposed that cultural norms and prescriptions that both encourage and devalue women's relational orientation promote the development of schemas about how to create and maintain intimate relationships, which can lead women to silence feelings, thoughts, and actions in important relationships. More specifically, self-silencing refers to removing critical aspects of the self from dialogue for specific relational purposes, namely in an attempt to maintain the relationship (Jack, 1999). Self-silencing in relationships, in turn, results in loss of self and renders women susceptible to symptoms of depression (Jack).

Jack's (1991) self-silencing model, developed through a longitudinal study of depressed women, identifies sociocultural messages and prescriptions as playing a prominent role in women's relational functioning. Problematic relational patterns, involving suppression of voice and loss of self, are evident as women attempt to embody images imposed on them by partners, family, and the larger culture. Moreover, the process of accommodating to powerful cultural standards that largely discount feminine knowledge, perspectives, and values may ultimately leave women afraid or unable to name their own experiences in relationship. Self-silencing is ultimately marked by a decreased ability to manifest and affirm aspects of the self that feel central to one's identity in relationships (Jack, 1999).

Like Glick and Fiske (1996), Jack (1991) pointed to the reality of a historical cultural ambivalence toward women and extended its relevancy to women's relational functioning. She wrote, "For centuries, women's bodies and nature have been simultaneously defined, exalted, and devalued by a male-dominated culture" (p. 85). She contended that the historical legacy of the "good woman" lives on in collective images of women as loving, kind, and understanding in relationship, particularly relationships with men and children. Moreover, idealized images of traditional feminine virtues are characterized by constraint, including self-denial, self-sacrifice, self-effacement, and self-restraint. Jack illustrated the powerful impact of internalized idealistic images of feminine goodness with an excerpt from Virginia Woolf's (1942 as cited in Jack, 1991) "Angel in the House":

> It was she who used to come between me and my paper when I was writing reviews. It was she who bothered me and wasted my time and so tormented me

> that at last I killed her. You who come of a younger and happier generation may not have heard of her—you may not know what I mean by the Angel in the House. I will describe her as shortly as I can. She was intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed herself daily. If there was chicken, she took the leg; if was draught, she sat in it—in short she was so constituted that she never had a mind or a wish of her own, but preferred to sympathize with the minds and wishes of others…I turned upon her and caught her by her throat. I did my best to kill her. My excuse, if I were to be had up in a court of law, would be that I acted in self-defense. Had I not killed her, she would have killed me. (pp. 236-238)

Jack contended that, even today, women continue to be socialized within the context of prevailing cultural messages dictating what it means to be a "good woman." Moreover, along with other relational scholars (e.g., Miller, 1986), she reconceptualized traditionally pathologizing views of women (i.e., as dependent, weak, passive, and masochistic) as reflective of women's relational adaptation within a larger cultural context rather than reflective of internal, psychological weakness.

The internalization of idealized cultural prescriptions for women ultimately challenges the ability to present oneself authentically in relationship. Jack (1991) highlighted an unyielding internal conflict between the "Authentic Self"—the first-person voice of understanding that bases its values and beliefs on personal observation and experience, and the "Over-Eye"—a third-person voice that speaks with a moralistic, "objective," and judgmental tone that condemns the authentic self. Jack described the struggle between these two voices:

> This inner oppressor continually demands behavior based on the norms and authority of the culture—that is, its shoulds: how to behave in order to be loved, in order to be included within the community of peers. This voice confuses the authentic self and obscures what it knows from personal experience, discounting such experience with the weight of shoulds, collective judgments, and negative self-evaluation. (p. 101)

The strength and effectiveness of the "Over-Eye" is proposed to reflect a woman's personal relational history, current relationships, and the larger social hierarchy related to gender.

Internalized imperatives of feminine virtue require a posture in relationship that is essentially impossible to attain. The relational outgrowth of idealized notions of what it means to be a "good woman" require perfection—perfect looks, perfect qualities, and perfect behavior (Jack, 1991). Moreover, because women are given the message that such imperatives hold the promise of securing intimacy in heterosexual relationships, they are viewed as positive ways of being in relationship; ultimately, however, adopting such a relational posture places striving for intimacy at direct odds with authenticity. More specifically, such underlying beliefs about how to connect intimately with others may lead women to subordinate their own needs in relationship and to believe that acting according to their own needs is selfish and ultimately disruptive to the relationship.

Jack (1991) also drew a connection between women's socialization to hide or disguise their physical bodies to meet cultural standards of beauty and the creation of a false self in relationship. Ultimately, activities such as shaving body hair and applying make-up share important similarities with the acts of discarding and covering parts of the

self in relationship—all are aimed at pleasing men. Brown (1991) observed this collective phenomenon in a qualitative study of women's development and proclaimed, "*Cover up*, girls are told as they reach adolescence, daily, in innumerable ways. Cover your body, cover your feelings, cover your relationships, cover your voice…" (p. 22). Moreover, research supports a relationship between women who endorse benevolently idealistic attitudes toward women and increased cosmetic use (e.g., Franzoi, 2001). Likewise, self-silencing is ultimately conceptualized as a way of coping with the status quo by hiding one's authenticity behind an accepted façade (Jack, 1999).

Also, it is important to note that there are real consequences for women who deviate from cultural gender norms in relationship. For example, previously reviewed literature supports that hostile reactions are reserved for women who deviate from traditional notions of feminine behavior (e.g., Glick et al., 1997; Sibley & Wilson, 2004). Moreover, Jack (1991; 1999) contended that both cultural and internalized imperatives threaten women with the loss of relationship. In other words, women who adopt idealized standards likely feel that doing so attenuates the probability that they will be rejected or abandoned. Additionally, the social reality of women's systematic subordination, including subjection to male violence and economic dependence, likely strengthens adherence to cultural standards.

Ironically, women's efforts to hide important parts of themselves in order to achieve intimacy and to maintain important relationships ultimately eliminate the possibility of real mutuality in the relationship. Mutuality is considered a prerequisite for intimacy (Jack, 1991) and promotes growth through relationships (Genero et al., 1992). The act of self-silencing in relationship is an example of the "central relational paradox"

highlighted in RCT, which is characterized by the process of keeping large parts of oneself out of relationships in an effort to seek connection (Miller & Stiver, 1997). Consistent with Jack's self-silencing theory, relational-cultural theorists consider such attempts to attain relational connection based on inauthenticity to be at the root of many psychological problems, particularly for women.

Accordingly, extant research supports a relationship between self-silencing and a number of variables relevant to psychological health. Self-silencing has been consistently linked to depression in samples of both women and men (e.g., Ali & Toner, 2001; Cramer, Gallant, & Langlois, 2005; Gratch et al., 1995), to disordered eating patterns in women (Frank & Thomas, 2003; Piran & Cormier, 2005; Wechsler, Riggs, Stabb, & Marshall, 2006), to various partner and relational variables in heterosexual couples (Harper & Welsh, 2007; Thompson, 1995; Thompson, Whiffen, & Aube, 2001; Uebelacker, Courtnage, & Whisman, 2003), to psychosocial adaption in women with cancer (Kayser, Sormanti, & Strainchamps, 1999), and to decreased reduction of depressive symptoms post-therapy in a sample of women seeking counseling (Ali, Oatley, & Toner, 2002).

Additionally, self-silencing has been examined as an important relational construct linking various psychosocial variables with depression. For example, in their sample of community participants involved in a committed relationship, Thompson et al. (2001) reported that self-silencing mediated the association between perceived spousal criticism and depressive symptoms for women and the association between perceptions of the father and current romantic partner and depression in men. Additionally, Uebelacker et al. (2003) found that self-silencing mediated the relationship between

marital dissatisfaction and symptoms of depression for women but not for men in a community sample of married individuals, while Whiffen , Foot, and Thompson (2007) reported that self-silencing mediated marital conflict and depression for both women and men in another community sample. Flett et al. (2007) reported that self-silencing functioned as both a moderator and partial mediator of the link between socially prescribed perfectionism and depression in a mixed gender university sample. Finally, Cramer et al. (2005) identified self-silencing as a mediator of instrumentality and depression for undergraduate women and men. These findings suggest that self-silencing may be an important factor linking various psychosocial contexts and experiences with psychological health and that it may function differently for women and men.

Although Jack proposed the construct of self-silencing to account for depressive symptoms in women, a number of studies have demonstrated that both women and men self-silence in relationship and that men may do so more than women (Cramer & Thoms, 2003; Duarte & Thompson, 1999; Gratch, Bassett, & Attra, 1995; Remen, Chambless, & Rodebaugh, 2002). However, it has been argued that women and men may self-silence for different reasons (Gratch et al., 1995). In fact, studies exploring the factor structure of the Silencing the Self Scale (STSS; Jack & Dill, 1992), a self-report measure developed to measure the intensity of an individual's self-silencing schema, have revealed varying factor solutions for women and men (Cramer & Thoms, 2003; Remen et al., 2002). Remen et al. concluded that tests of convergent and discriminant validity supported the construct validity of the STSS for women, but not for men.

Additionally, findings from a number of studies support a significant relationship between self-silencing and depression in samples of women (Ali et al., 2002; Ali &

Toner, 2001) and in samples of women and men (Cramer et al., 2005; Flett, Besser, Hewitt, & Davis, 2007; Gratch et al., 1995; Harper & Welsh, 2007; Thompson, 1995; Thompson et al., 2001; Uebelacker et al., 2003; Whiffen et al., 2007). Moreover, while associations between self-silencing and depression have generally been higher for women than men and some evidence suggests that self-silencing may account for nearly twice as much variance in depression for women as for men (Thompson, 1995; Uebelacker et al., 2003), other studies have demonstrated no significant difference by gender (Gratch et al., 1995; Harper & Welsh, 2007).

Empirical evidence supports that self-silencing demonstrates a consistent relationship with varying factors relevant to psychological health and may be an important factor linking psychosocial variables and depression. The inconsistency of findings related to self-silencing in women and men seems to suggest that further examination of the construct is warranted. In particular, it might be useful to consider self-silencing in the context of sociocultural experiences unique to women (i.e., sexism) to further elucidate the saliency of the construct to women's mental health. In fact, Jack (1991; Jack & Dill, 1992) argues that the extent to which women self-silence is impacted by the specific social or relational contexts in which they find themselves. Finally, a recent study supported self-silencing as a mediator between women's experiences of chronic sexism and psychological distress (Hurst & Beesley, 2008), thereby identifying it as an important relational process in women's attempts to cope with sexist discrimination.

Perceived Sexist Discrimination, Ambivalent Sexism, Self-Silencing, and Psychological Distress

The current project proposes to test a model that is informed by the previously reviewed theoretical and empirical literature. First, consistent with RCT and self-silencing theory (e.g., Jack, 1991; Mille & Stiver, 1997), which both purport that sociocultural messages, including sexist discrimination, are subject to internalization by members of marginalized groups, and empirical evidence suggesting that cultural discrimination predicts internalized oppression (e.g., Hill & Fischer, 2008), this study will examine whether perceived sexist events occurring within the past year and over a lifetime predict ambivalently sexist attitudes by college women, toward women. More specifically, the differential impact of perceived discrimination will be examined by attending to women's endorsement of both HS and BS attitudes toward women. Consistent with cross-cultural and experimental research (e.g., Fischer, 2006; Glick et al., 2000) suggesting that women are more likely to endorse benevolent ideologies toward women when confronted with hostilely sexist environments, it is predicted that higher levels of perceived sexist events will predict BS, but not HS, in a sample of college women.

Replicating a recent study (Hurst & Beesley, 2008), this project will also test whether perceived sexist events predict self-silencing in this sample of college women. Consistent with previous findings, it is expected that women's experience of lifetime sexist events will predict increased self-silencing in relationship. The absence of a relationship between self-silencing and sexist events occurring over the past year in the previous study suggested a more direct link between recent sexism and distress.

Likewise, this finding is expected to be replicated. Examining the relationship between cultural experiences and relational functioning is consistent with RCT and self-silencing theory's recognition of the powerful influence of cultural imperatives on the construction of, and behavior in, relationships (Jack, 1991; Miller & Stiver, 1997). Additionally, based on a substantial body of supporting literature (e.g., Fischer & Holz, 2007; Klonoff et al., 2000; Moradi & Subich, 2002), perceived sexist events are expected to predict increased psychological distress.

Moreover, utilizing theoretical tenets from relational-cultural, ambivalent sexism, and self-silencing theories, this study will examine whether women's internalization of sexist ideology impacts relational functioning. Such a relationship is supported by empirical work demonstrating that women's endorsement of HS and BS attitudes was related to intimate relational patterns (Yakushko, 2005). This finding is consistent with RCT's conceptualization of an inextricable link between cultural controlling images and relational images, which ultimately form the foundation for relational functioning. Moreover, ambivalent sexism theory (Glick & Fiske, 1996) supports that BS, with its idealization of traditional women and emphasis on reinforcing traditional feminine gender roles, is likely more directly linked with restrictive relational patterns (i.e., self-silencing). Accordingly, the process of self-silencing is purported to reflect women's relational adaptation to idealized cultural imperatives for what it means to be a "good woman" (Jack, 1991). Therefore, it is expected that women's endorsement of BS, but not necessarily HS, will predict increased self-silencing in college women. Additionally, BS is expected to mediate the hypothesized relationship between perceived sexist events and self-silencing.

The "central relational paradox" process highlighted in both RCT and self-silencing theory (Jack, 1991; Miller & Stiver, 1997) is considered to be a fundamental source of psychological distress. Moreover, this may be particularly true for women, who are encouraged through gender socialization processes to define their sense of self through relationships (Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1986). It makes sense that the lack of authenticity and mutuality that results from engaging in restrictive relational patterns characterized by the removal of important aspects of the self in order to maintain intimate relationships would create distress, particularly for relationally-oriented women. Therefore, self-silencing is anticipated to predict increased psychological distress in college women. This expected relationship is supported by several studies linking self-silencing to various measures of psychological health (e.g., Ali, Oatley, & Toner, 2002; Cramer, Gallant, & Langlois, 2005; Hurst & Beesley, 2008; Piran & Cormier, 2005).

Furthermore, consistent with theoretical contentions that controlling images impact relational functioning, which in turn impacts psychological functioning (Miller & Stiver, 1997; Walker, 2004), it is expected that self-silencing will mediate the relationship between women's endorsement of BS and psychological distress. This expectation is further supported by research identifying social support as a key variable linking internalized sexism and distress (Szymanski & Kashubeck-West, 2008).

Alternatively, it is anticipated that endorsement of HS attitudes toward women will directly predict increased psychological distress. Possessing a hostile ideology toward members of one's own group might be expected to influence distress directly, perhaps as a function of the inherent conflict women may feel as a result of directing hostility toward other women. Moreover, it is conceivable that some of this hostility

might also be simultaneously directed inward, toward the individual women endorsing an HS ideology. This hypothesized relationship is supported by research suggesting that women higher in HS report negative perceptions of menstruating women (Forbes, Adams-Curtis, White, & Holmgren, 2003), greater body dissatisfaction (Forbes et al., 2004), and endorsement of Western beauty ideals (Forbes, Collingsworth, Jobe, Braun, & Wise, 2007).

In sum, the literature reviewed leads to a proposed model for the current study. The purpose of this study is to examine perceived experiences of sexism occurring within the past year and over a lifetime as they relate to women's psychological distress. Additionally, hypothesized mediating effects of internalized sexism, measured by women's endorsement of ambivalently sexist attitudes toward women, and self-silencing in relationships will be examined within the proposed sexism-distress model. The hypothesized mediation model is shown in Figure 1. Specifically, the following hypotheses will be examined:

Hypothesis 1: When examined concurrently in path analysis, lifetime sexist events, recent sexist events, and hostile sexism will have direct and unique links to psychological distress.

Hypothesis 2: Benevolent sexism will mediate (either partially or fully) the relationship between perceived sexist events and self-silencing.

Hypothesis 3: Self-silencing, in turn, will mediate (either partially or fully) the relationship between benevolent sexism and psychological distress.

Chapter Three

Method

Participants & Procedure

Women ages 18 to 64 will be recruited in undergraduate classrooms at a large, public Southwestern university. Participants may receive course credit in exchange for their participation; however, other options for course credit will also be available to all students. After completion of an electronic survey, participants will be taken to a separate page that allows them to provide basic indentifying information that will then be provided to course instructors so that course credit may be awarded. This page will in no way be linked to their survey responses.

Data will be collected utilizing a web-survey (i.e., Survey Monkey) that will be created and maintained by the Center for Educational Development and Research (CEDAR) at the University of Oklahoma. To help secure the survey data, no one other than the primary investigator and CEDAR staff will have access to the data. Methods to ensure data integrity will include instructing participants to take the survey only once to help deter duplicate submissions and the use of a secure server to prevent tampering with data and inadvertent access to confidential information. Results from internet studies are considered consistent with findings obtained from traditional paper-and-pencil methods and are not adversely impacted by repeat or nonserious responders (Gosling, Vazire, Srivastava, & John, 2004).

Potential participants who meet the inclusion criteria will be given two options to receive a link to the electronic survey. They may opt to provide an e-mail address on a sign-up sheet that is collected by the principal investigator after they have been read a

recruitment script with a brief description of the study. A recruitment email with the study link will be sent to these women. Alternatively, they may opt to take a handout with the study link address on it. These women may access the link at their convenience without providing an email address.

The women who choose to participate will then be taken to an online informed consent page, where they will be given the opportunity to either participate or to opt out of the study. Those who choose to participate will then complete a demographic form and the four study instruments described below. It is anticipated that the total participation time will be approximately 20 to 30 minutes. A link to exit the survey will be provided on each page of the electronic survey to allow participants to withdraw their participation at any time.

The targeted sample size for this study was determined utilizing Klein's (1998) recommendation that 10 to 20 participants be included for every estimated parameter in a path analytic model. The current model (see Figure 1.) has 15 estimated parameters, which means that the targeted sample will include 150 to 300 participants. Parameters were calculated by adding the number of direct paths (i.e., straight arrows from one variable to another), exogenous variables (i.e., lifetime sexist events, recent sexist events, and hostile sexism), correlation paths (i.e., curved arrows between correlated variables), and disturbance, or error, terms for each of the endogenous variables (i.e., benevolent sexism, self-silencing, and psychological distress).

Instruments

Schedule of Sexist Events (SSE). The SSE (Klonoff & Landrine, 1995) is a self-report instrument consisting of 20 items measuring perceptions of recent and lifetime

sexist discrimination in women's lives. Sample items include: "How many times have you been treated unfairly by your co-workers, fellow students or colleagues because you are a woman?" "How many times have people made inappropriate or unwanted sexual advances to you because you are a woman?" and " How many times have you been made fun of, picked on, pushed, shoved, hit, or threatened with harm because you are a woman?" Participants respond using a scale indicating how often each sexist event has happened, with response options of *1 (never), 2 (once in a while or less than 10% of the time), 3 (sometimes or 10%-25% of the time), 4 (a lot or 26%-49% of the time), 5 (most of the time or 50%-70% of the time),* and *6 (almost all of the time or more than 70% of the time).* Each item requires two responses: one for frequency with which the event has occurred in the past year and one for the frequency with which the event has occurred over one's entire lifetime. Higher scores indicate a greater amount of perceived sexist discrimination.

Internal consistency estimates for the SSE-Recent and Lifetime subscales have been in the low .90s (Klonoff & Landrine, 1995). Klonoff and Landrine (1995) found that SSE scores correlated significantly and positively with measures of daily hassles and stressful life events. Evidence for discriminant validity was demonstrated with nonsignificant or negligible correlations between SSE scores and measures of social desirability (Fischer et al., 2000). Factor analysis of SSE-Recent and Lifetime subscales revealed four interrelated factors: sexist degradation, sexism in distant relationships, sexism in close relationships, and sexism in the workplace.

Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI). The ASI (Glick & Fiske, 1996) is a 22-item self-report instrument designed to measure benevolent and hostile sexism.

Participants respond to items using a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (*disagree strongly*) to 5 (*agree strongly*). After reverse scoring six items, higher scores reflect greater levels of hostile and benevolent sexism. A sample item from the 11-item Hostile Sexism subscale includes: "Women seek to gain power over men by getting control over them." Alternatively, a sample item from the 11-item Benevolent Sexism subscale is: "Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess."

Internal consistency estimates for the ASI have ranged from .80 to the low .90s for the Hostile Sexism subscale and .70 to the upper .80s for the Benevolent Sexism subscale (e.g., Fischer, 2006; Glick & Fiske, 1996; Viki & Abrams, 2003). Convergent and discriminant validity has been supported through correlations in the expected direction with other gender-related measures and measures of contemporary sexism (Masser & Abrams, 1999). Moreover, evidence of factorial validity has been demonstrated through confirmatory factor analyses across multiple cultures (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Glick et al., 2000).

Silencing the Self Scale (STSS). The STSS (Jack & Dill, 1992) is a 31-item self-report scale designed to measure behavior in and beliefs about intimate relationships. Participants respond on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*, with higher scores indicating greater self-silencing. Items reflect four rationally derived subscales: Silencing the Self (e.g., "I don't speak my feelings in an intimate relationship when I know that they will cause disagreement"), Externalized Self-Perception (e.g., "I tend to judge myself by how other people see me"), Divided Self (e.g., "Often I look happy enough on the outside, but inwardly I feel angry and rebellious"), and Care as Self-Sacrifice (e.g., "Caring means putting the other person's

needs in front of my own").

Jack and Dill reported an alpha of .86 for the total STSS score. The four STSS subscales have been found to be highly intercorrelated (Jack & Dill). Therefore, the total scale score will be used in this study. Jack and Dill found that STSS scores were correlated in the expected direction with depression scores and across women of varying social contexts. Further evidence for the construct validity of the STSS in a sample of undergraduate women was provided by predicted associations with both attachment and personality styles (Remen et al., 2002).

Outcome Questionnaire 45 (OQ45). Subjective psychological distress was assessed with the OQ45 (Lambert, Lunnen, Umphress, Hansen, & Burlingame, 1994). The scale consists of 45 items that are rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *never* to *almost always* in regard to how much discomfort they have caused the participant during the past week. The range of total scores is 0-180, with a higher score indicating that the individual is reporting a higher level of total psychological distress. Three subscales measure symptoms of distress, social-role functioning, and interpersonal difficulties. In a previous study (Frey, Tobin, & Beesley, 2004), subscales were fairly highly correlated (r = .62 and above), and total alpha scores were .93 for women. Based on research suggesting problems with multicollinearity among the subscales, the total score will be used to assess psychological distress.

Research Questions

Research questions for the proposed study are: (a) Do lifetime and recent perceived sexist events predict psychological distress in a sample of college women? (b) Does hostile sexism directly predict psychological distress? (c) Does benevolent sexism

mediate the relationship between lifetime and recent sexist events and self-silencing in relationships? And, finally (d) does self-silencing mediate the relationship between benevolent sexism and psychological distress?

Data Analysis

In order to replicate a previous study that found that women's experiences of sexism predict psychological distress and to explore the hypothesis that hostile sexism is associated with women's increased distress, lifetime sexist events (LSE), recent sexist events (RSE), and hostile sexism (HS) will be simultaneously regressed onto psychological distress in a regression equation. More specifically, relevant demographic variables will be entered in step one, followed by LSE, RSE, and HS in step two. Then, path analysis will be utilized to examine the mediating effects of benevolent sexism (BS) and self-silencing in the relationship between perceived sexism and psychological distress (Figure 1.)

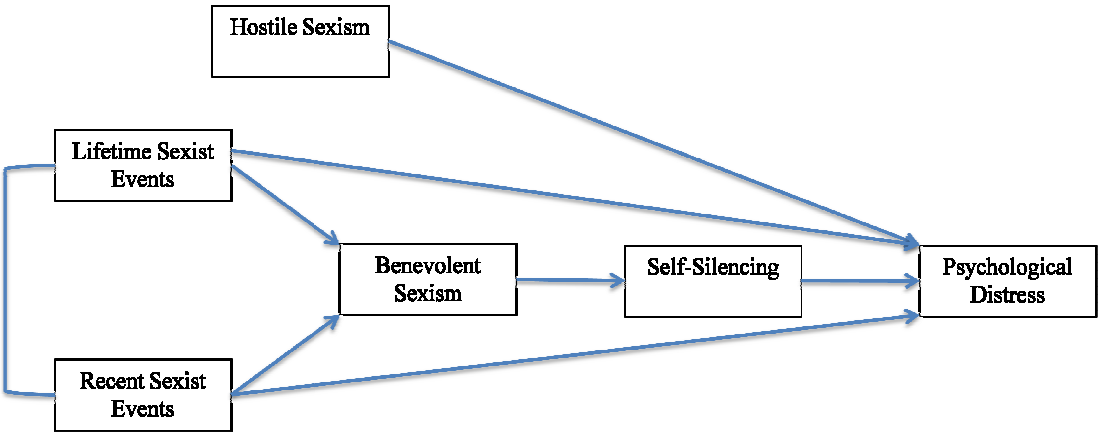
The current project proposes to examine the relationships among several variables within a hypothesized model supported by the reviewed theory and empirical research. Path analysis, an extension of multiple linear regression, is a statistical technique that allows for testing of more complex models than multiple regression (Streiner, 2005). Not only can path analysis support the examination of several intervening or mediating variables, but it also allows for estimation of both direct and indirect effects. Moreover, it allows the researcher to test the overall fit of the model to the data in order to determine if the theoretically derived model is consistent with the actual observed data (Mertler & Vannatta, 2006). Path analysis requires that researchers carefully develop the proposed model. More specifically, the model should be both parsimonious yet include as many

relevant variables as possible. Additionally, relationships among variables must be specified within a model that makes both clinical and theoretical sense (Streiner).

Consistent with Karr and Larson's (2005) call for counseling psychology research informed by theories or models, as well as the potential clinical utility of identifying specific processes underlying women's experiences of discrimination, the current study proposes to use path analysis to test a comprehensive model of perceived sexism and college women's psychological distress. Moreover, path analysis allows the concurrent examination of the proposed linear function of internalized sexism and self-silencing within the relationship between perceived sexist discrimination and distress.

Figure 1.

Hypothesized Mediation Model



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