

Why Chivalry Should Die:

The Effects of Benevolent Sexism on Hetero-Romantic Relationships

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### Abstract

Relationships aid in our physical and mental well-being, therefore it's important that one of the most intimate relationships we have should be satisfying and functional. I discovered that while benevolent sexism does have some benefits, overall its effects are overwhelmingly negative regarding the functionality and satisfaction of romantic relationships. It reinforces gender roles, through rewards and punishments of gender -typical or non-typical behavior, creates women to become less ambitious in careers, leads women to perform more poorly, excuses violent behavior from "benevolent" men, legitimizes unequal domestic labor, and produces lofty expectations which lead to lower relationship satisfaction. Although benefits have been shown, such as physical/economic protection, greater investment in family, and life satisfaction, these do not outweigh the negative impact benevolent sexism causes and its perpetuation of gender inequality.

Keywords: Psychology, Benevolent Sexism, Hostile Sexism, Ambivalent Sexism, Gender Inequality, Relationship Satisfaction

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Most people are unaware of what benevolent sexism is, or even its existence. When sexism is brought up, what comes to mind is typically hostile sexism or hatred towards women. Yet these two are not inseparable; they coexist and play into each other. While benevolent sexism may be seen as chivalry, it's alarming that it brings the romantic associations of prince charming people generally have to mind. The notion of "chivalry", while seemingly innocent, plays a large part in the continuation of gender inequality. As society progresses and gender roles become more blurred, this form of prejudice, or "benevolent sexism", can have harmful effects on the romantic relationships men and women have with each other. I will explore these effects, including some possible benefits, through various psychological researches.

#### **The Importance of Relationships**

Love and belonging is the third tier of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which is an aspect of one's Psychological well-being. This component focuses on the determination to seek out and build relationships with others. This can include various amounts of close ties, whether they are with romantic partners, friends, coworkers, children, etc. Although all forms of relationships are important for a sense of belonging, since my focus is on romantic relationships, I will be exploring this kind of bond more heavily than others.

It's not uncommon to hear that the relationships of the current day are different than they used to be. While this may seem like a whining comment from older generations, it's not entirely wrong. Average marriages are less satisfying than they used to be (pre 1965). This has been connected to the shift of expectations, where previously, marriages were assumed to fulfill safety and physiological needs, but current marriages are expected to fulfill higher, psychological needs, such as self-esteem and self-actualization. The cause of this shift seems influenced mostly by 1960's counter culture, which encouraged self-expression and self-discovery. Although this may seem like a turn for the worse, it was found that current marriages that were considered the "best" are significantly more satisfying than overall pre-1965 marriages or current "average" marriages. The "best" marriages were those who focused on higher levels of needs (psychological and self-fulfillment) and actually satisfied these needs. When higher needs are met, it is associated with a greater sense of richness in life and more peak experiences, while lower needs only produce relief and relaxation (Finkel et al, 2015). This finding is particularly important in comparison to my later discussions regarding the possible benefits of benevolent sexism.

While many within the field of psychology have opposed Maslow's hierarchy, the desire for belonging as a basic human motivation has still persisted. Even under extremely unfavorable conditions, people still wish to form bonds with people, whether it is through a common interest or merely greater exposure to each other.

Even when there is no practical reason to maintain a relationship, many find it difficult to dissolve them. Deficits in belonging can have negative effects on the body, including physical and mental well-being. People also spend a great deal thinking about relationships and belonging, almost excessively (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Other studies have linked belonging with an enhancement of meaning in one's life, which directly relates to the promotion of well-being (Lambert et al., 2013). While these two studies address belonging in greater relation to social groups, they still have validity in the discussion of romantic relationships. If developing close bonds is such an important part of our well-being then maintaining healthy, functional relationships with those who we are most intimate with, must also be a priority.

### **Femininity and Masculinity: What are Gender Roles?**

In order to understand sexism, it's necessary to unravel what exactly gender is and where gender roles stem from. While this seems like a fairly simple concept, it's more complex than some think. Gender is not just male or female, but our understanding or perception about what is masculine or feminine. These perceptions usually relate to traits rooted in stereotypes, such as being dainty is feminine but being strong is masculine. The roots of these stereotypes lie in our awareness of the connection between the characteristics of agency and communion and masculinity and femininity. Agency relates to goal achievement and task functioning, with traits of competence, assertiveness, and decisiveness. Evidently,

someone with these characteristics would be more competent in terms of economic gains which is why agency is associated with the role of provider. Since agency is perceived as more masculine, this is why society connects men with the provider role. Meanwhile, communion refers to the preservation of relationships and social functioning and contains traits of benevolence, trustworthiness, and morality. This then would connect communion to the caretaker role, which in turn associated the role of women (Abele, Wojciszke, 2019). People have justified these associations through evolutionary theory, such that these are just fundamental differences between men and women. Since women have the capability to carry children, they have evolved to be caring and nurturing. Therefore since women are handicapped in a sense by their pregnancy, men have evolved to become their providers. Others have noted that this theory dismisses the environmental effects of gender and gender roles. Social role theory states that gender differences are more a product of culture. One's behavior is then just a product of rewards and punishments of gender conforming or nonconforming conduct. These two theories are important to understand in that they will further set up the framework for how benevolent sexism is either undermined or contested.

### **What Is Benevolent Sexism?**

Benevolent sexism, as defined by Glick & Fiske (2001), is “a subjectively favorable, chivalrous ideology that offers protection and affection to women who embrace conventional roles (pg.109).” Because of its "favorable" ideology, it is often overlooked, or unknown in comparison to hostile sexism, which is antipathy of women. Yet the two are not inseparable; Glick and Fiske argue that feelings towards women are in general, ambivalent, meaning that within society seemingly contradictory ideas are prevalent. They also found that in nations where hostile sexism was strongly endorsed, benevolent sexism was also strongly endorsed. This supports the idea that both hostile and benevolent sexism are mutually supportive bases for patriarchal gender relations. These contrasting feelings can also be seen within pop-culture and is known as the “Madonna-Whore dichotomy”, where women are either innocent wives who need protection or they are evil seductresses who wish to control men (Glick & Fiske, 2001).

Benevolent sexism is often highly endorsed, and seen as common decency or chivalrous, which relates directly to the previous discussion of gender roles. If men are meant to fit the provider role, they should view women, who similarly fit the communion role, with affection and paternalism. Women who fit into the traditional gender roles then do not view benevolent sexism, as sexism, because the actions of men are out of “love”. Yet, when women defy gender roles, those who endorse benevolent sexism, see them as ungrateful of what men provide them. This allows

men to conserve their positive self-image as protectors, and distance themselves from hostile sexism (Glick & Fiske, 2001). This then reinforces gender “typical” behavior, which will be further discussed later on.

There is a great deal of cognitive dissonance that plays along with this kind of thought process and in order to unravel benevolent sexism’s potentially harmful effects, it’s important to make sense of exactly how it is justified. Jost and Banaji’s (1994), System Justification Theory explains why people maintain and endorse certain social structures, even at the expense of their own direct, or group interests. One of the most common examples of this theory is the use of gender stereotypes in order to rationalize the division of labor. Even though stereotypes are harmful to women and dismiss their capabilities as human beings, many still affirm to them because it “makes sense” that women have specific responsibilities and men provide what they lack; it supplies a sense of equality of labor, which in reality is not equal at all. Similar concepts are displayed in Lerner’s (1980), writings on Just-World Theory. This theory states that people ‘get what they deserve’, or that one has control of everything in their life. This isn’t a very niche way of thought and can be compared to the American concept of “pulling oneself up from their bootstraps”: If you work hard, you can get far. This is often a way to justify not providing for those who are poor or supporting programs that benefit victims of abuse, drug addiction, or people of color. Kay and Jost, (2003) explore this more specifically in terms of how this justification is related to complementary stereotypes. While the word

stereotype has a negative connotation, some stereotypes are seen as positive, for example, Asians are associated with being good at math. The research specifically compares the narrative of the poor but honest or happy stereotype. While these seem like likable characteristics, they are used to justify economic inequality in that it is okay if they are poor because it provides them with other benefits that the rich will not have. While these relate to more economic justifications, it's easy to see the connection in how benevolent sexism provides a similar rationale. Even though women are considered weak and dainty, it's justified in that they are kinder and more nurturing than men. Therefore the harmful stereotypes are deemed acceptable because a positive one accompanies it. This is why this form of sexism is so unnerving; it's very difficult to tear down when even the people who are harmed by it consistently defend it.

### **Damaging Effects on Relationships**

#### **Reinforcement of Gender Roles**

What, then, are the actual implications of benevolent sexism on romantic relationships? The most evident is its reinforcement of gender roles. As mentioned previously, gender roles reinforce the association of men being providers and women as nurturers. A study done by Lau, Kay and Spencer, (2007) shows how stereotypes coupled with System Justification Theory can influence whom we choose as partners. This research was oriented around providing a sense of system threat in reference to the legitimacy of their government, showing worsening

economic, social, and political climate, while the control condition simply provided a sense of a stable, regular climate. Participants were then asked to rate multiple women according to their romantic interests. These women were either consistent or not with benevolent sexist ideals, such as being career-oriented, a partier, athletic or vulnerable, pure, making men complete. What was discovered was that men who were in the system threat category rated the women who conformed to benevolent sexist ideas significantly higher than those who did not. Those who did not feel a threat to their beliefs (within the control), did not rate these women higher. This is a particularly important finding since it suggests that having strong beliefs about “the system”, in such that it is fair and just, can result in a person being attracted to those who reinforce these beliefs (benevolent sexist conforming women) resulting in gender role reinforcement. Lau, Kay, and Spencer also suggest that this can generate self-fulfilling prophecies, where women adhere to more subordinate roles in order to appeal to men, as they will be more respected as individuals and considered better prospects for romantic partners. This essentially suggests women may feel it necessary to mold their identity in order to fit into the stereotypes to enter a relationship or feel romantically adequate within a relationship.

This self-fulfilling prophecy concept is especially troubling when looked through the lens of Becker and Wrights’ (2011) research on motivation for social change. This study demonstrates how benevolent sexism actually reduces women’s involvement in collective action, meanwhile, hostile sexism promotes it. This is

directly related to system justification theory, in that benevolent sexism evokes beliefs of a fair system, where there are clear advantages of being a woman, whereas hostile sexism decreases the perception of these advantages. These advantages are not only seen as positive, but flattering; such as women are ethically superior, more in touch with emotions and skilled caregivers. Therefore, these "advantages" make one less likely to see or understand the need for social change since the system is ultimately fair and equal under this assumption. While hostile sexism is seen as the most harmful in the eyes of most people, this is another reason why benevolent sexism shouldn't be overlooked as a lesser of two evils. The inaction benevolent sexism causes allows men to maintain dominance through more dotting means, which women are unaware of or agree to, making this behavior much more difficult to change than the obvious effects of hostile sexism. This study, combined with research done by Lau, Kay, and Spencer, could potentially explain why some women are complacent or inactive when in relationships with men who treat them as subservient, and fall prey to these self-fulfilling prophecies of gender role behavior.

Another study which shows how benevolent sexism can reinforce gender role behavior is I-Chang Lee's (2013) research on social dominance orientation and right-wing authoritarianism. This study examined the connection between the endorsement of either hostile or benevolent sexism, differing world-views, and differential family norms. Social Dominance Orientation and Right-Wing Authoritarianism are worldviews in which the former refers to those who view the world through competitive means and adhere to social hierarchies, and people who

hold the latter see the world through perceptions of danger and choose to maintain social traditions. The researchers found that those who held a social dominance orientation expressed more hostile sexist beliefs, while those who held a right-wing authoritarian view displayed more benevolent sexist ideals. The reason why this finding is so important is because right-wing authoritarianism justifies discrimination of those who violate social traditions, in that they are a “threat.” While non-traditional women aren’t necessarily a physical threat, the perception is that they are destructive to the system and therefore their sense of security. The researchers also found that those who endorsed differential family norms also enforced benevolent and hostile sexism. This suggests that the more one is introduced to unequal relationships, the more they see this distribution as normal and as an example of what their own relationships should be like. Therefore children, who see their parents display these kinds of relationships, may model their behavior on them and continue to perpetuate the cycle. The notion of non-traditional women being “threatening” can also extend to relationships in that when women violate any norms, they may threaten the safety and comfort of their relationship. This can lead to women limiting themselves in what they choose to do and perceiving men’s restrictions or controlling behavior as a form of protection from this “danger”.

This enforcement of gender roles also permits a double standard for dating behaviors. Since masculinity puts the role of agency onto men, it gives them power

and control in dating scenarios. This means they are always expected to initiate, whether it means simply asking someone out on a date, for sex or marriage. While this may seem like basic expectations, it forces women to be submissive, even though they may want to act. Women may fear to initiate, especially in sexual scenarios, in fear of being called “easy” or a “slut”. A study done by Alexa Paynter and Campbell Leaper (2016), found a strong correlation between benevolent sexism and dating double standards. They specifically looked at five courtship behaviors: Initiating a date, holding a door open, paying for a date, proposing, and taking another’s last name. These were highly endorsed by not only men but women, Women actually scored higher in affirming to these traditional beliefs. This can possibly be due to men’s anxiety about dating, women engaging in system justification. Greater religious attendance, conservative views, and television viewing also predicted stronger endorsement of double-dating standards. This suggests that these beliefs are intertwined with society and other co-existing beliefs. Specifically, within the media, it was found that these standards were frequently shown on television between characters and are further endorsed through magazines, which depict women as sexual objects, and men as strong, muscular beings. This double standard has actually found to be debilitating, psychologically and physically for both men and women (Richmond et al. 2015).

### **Perceptions of Competence and Overall Ambition**

If benevolent sexism reinforces gender roles, it then potentially has the effect of deterring women from entering into fields that are considered more “masculine.” In research done by Viki Tendayi, Dominic Abrams, and Paul Hutchinson (2003), they discuss the connection between benevolent sexism and paternalistic chivalry. Paternalistic chivalry is defined as attitudes that are courteous and considerate to women but place restrictions on their behavior in relation to what is appropriate for women. It was found that there is a significant relationship between paternalistic chivalry and benevolent sexism, meaning those who have high endorsement of benevolent sexism prefer close relationships where men hold the power. Like the other studies mentioned, gender did not have a significant effect, which is possibly a result of system justification. This suggests women may hold back on their own success because they are instead encouraged to seek success through their partner’s success. If the man is more successful within a relationship, they ultimately hold the power by being a provider and dictating the economics of the relationship. Other research has found similar findings, such as women who associate male romantic partners with chivalrous representations (such as Disney’s princes) had less ambitious future goals because they expected their husband to provide them with economic support (Rudman and Heppen, 2000).

Research also suggests that benevolent sexism is actually worse than hostile sexism in terms of women’s cognitive performance (Dardenne and Dumont, 2007). Similar to Becker and Wright (2011), it’s believed that hostile sexism creates a

greater motivation for accomplishments because of the anger it incites; meanwhile benevolent sexism's more muted suggestion of women's lack of capabilities does not elicit such a reaction. In the four experiments performed within this study, it was only when benevolent sexism was introduced where performance dropped. Participants did initially not identify benevolent sexism as sexism, but in later experiments, it was shown to create unpleasant situations and troubling mental intrusions. Overall, this suggests that benevolent sexism creates feelings of self-doubt, anxiety, and decreased self-esteem. These feelings arise from the stigmatization benevolent sexism creates within contexts where women would feel inferior or incompetent. Similar to stereotype threat, there is reduced working memory in these situations which results in lower performance (Dardenne and Dumont, 2007). If this causes women to perform more poorly than usual, it potentially denies opportunities to women and may force them to be reliant on their significant other for support.

### **Unequal Household Labor**

Gender roles, by emphasizing communal traits for women,, reinforce the notion that the women's place is within the domestic sphere; It is therefore not the role of men to do things such as cleaning, taking care of the children, or cooking. Men not only perceive domestic work to be a women's job, but they are more anti-egalitarian in their views than women. They believe that the unequal domestic division of labor is fair and more satisfactory. Women though saw a greater

endorsement of benevolent sexism when their role within the family was omitted, which was perceived as threatening. This suggests some women find benefits from their domestic role and are not willing to give it up (Poeschl, Pinto, Murias, Silva, & Ribeiro, 2006). If we recall System Justification Theory, this justification that unequal domestic labor is fair is rooted in that the idea that men compensate for it by providing in other ways, such as being the sole income provider. Yet, currently, over 70% of mothers with children under 18 are in the workforce (DeWolf, 2017). This means both men and women both typically work and provide income for the family, but when women come home from work, they are still expected to fulfill domestic tasks while men are not. This is also concerning if we consider the mental and physical well-being of those working mothers. To be expected to do a full day worth of work, and then hours of unpaid domestic labor on top of it can be stressful, especially if they are not receiving any assistance.

### **Domestic Abuse and Violence**

While hostile sexism is associated with violence against women, it's important to remember the ambivalent nature of sexism. Benevolent sexism and hostile sexism coexist; when hostile sexism is endorsed, benevolent sexism is also endorsed. What typically divides the two, is whether or not the women involved adhere to traditional gender norms. Yet, there are times where benevolent sexism can actually justify hostile sexism if these norms are violated.

Research by Mercedes Duran, Miguel Moya, and Jesus Megias (2011) presented evidence that when husbands were displayed as high in benevolent sexism, participants rated forced marital sex as rape to a lesser degree. This coincides with the notion that within marriage, the husbands have marital rights and wives have marital duties in regards to sex. The blame then was attributed to the wife, rather than her being perceived as a victim of the assault. Benevolent sexism, therefore, may warp the perception of various aspects of intimate relationships in regards to gendered expectations; i.e., it's not considered "rape" because the role of being a wife means submitting to the sexual needs of one's husband, whether they want it or not. Therefore, benevolent sexism can have implications of what is considered more hostile sexism regarding the restriction and use of women's bodies.

Other literature has shown that endorsement of benevolent sexism also affects how victims of domestic abuse are perceived. When presented with gender conforming victims versus gender non-conforming victims (feminine or masculine), participants rated those who abided by gender norms as more likable than those who were not. In terms of likeability, this meant more positive impressions and more positive personality traits (Casa & Lee, 2014). These findings have implications in that it may result in different interpretations and senses of emergency within domestic abuse situations. Those who assist in situations regarding victims of abuse might unknowingly have biases, which affect the

procedure and treatment of those who have suffered. This can include anyone from mental health counselors, or even worse, those within the judicial system. It's possible to see that if domestic abuse is brought into a legal situation, a judge or jury may have biases toward gender conforming victims. Therefore those who are perceived as more masculine or conform less to benevolently sexist norms may seem less like a victim of abuse in the eye of the court. This is similar in comparison to the study done on marital rape, as it implies a form of violence is defended through a violation of certain gendered roles.

Benevolent sexism also seems to have effects on how women discern stalking. In general, stalking can be ambiguous, as it depends on the social context in order to determine what is ordinary or not within relationships. Research done by Miglietta and Maran (2017), specifically found that women identified a broader range of behavior as stalking than men. They also found that those high in hostile sexism were more empathetic towards stalking. On the other hand, those higher in benevolent sexism described stalking as an "annoying incident" rather than dangerous and disruptive. Both these forms of sexism appear to discredit stalking as a serious sense of danger and may even permit the tolerance of these behaviors.

This discovery seems to be especially prevalent within younger relationships during a time where social media plays a critical role in our everyday life. The advancement of technology, such as the Internet, makes it easier and easier to find information on people, therefore, creating less privacy. The 2018 Netflix television

series, *You*, displays how exactly stalking can be misinterpreted as “romantic”, merely by creating a character who is handsome and charming (one of the basis’ of benevolent sexism). The show’s plot revolves around Joe, a bookstore manager, who uses social media and the Internet to get close to a girl whom he has encountered within the bookstore. At first, this may seem like a story about a boy who simply has a crush on a girl, but the lengths Joe goes to in order to find out more about this girl far surpass anything considered normal behavior. Within the first few episodes, he finds a way to steal her phone, search through her messages, and eventually leads to him killing an ex-boyfriend of hers. Millie Bobby Brown, a young actress known for her role in Netflix’s *Stranger Things*, had defended Joe’s character on social media, by saying he was not a creepy stalker, as he was just in love with her, so the behavior was acceptable. While she later took back this comment after many concerned comments, it’s easy to see how merely displaying a character as charming changes how people perceive their behavior. Benevolent sexism does just this by creating the illusion that men just simply are charming men trying to get a girl, rather than the reality of it being dangerous and predatorily behavior.

### **Effects on Satisfaction and Longevity**

If the previous effects don’t seem damaging enough, research has shown that benevolent sexism seems to have overall negative effects on the satisfaction of heterosexual relationships. While hostile sexism has shown to create a sense of entitlement among men through narcissism, research done by Grubbs, Exline, and

Twenge (2014), predicted that a high endorsement of benevolent sexism would create more entitlement among women in that they deserve special treatment and goods. This finding was found even when controlled for openness to experience, age, and social desirability.

While it may not seem like an entirely bad thing to have high expectations for one's partner, this sense of entitlement can actually make women feel more vulnerable within relationships. Hammond and Overall (2013), found that the more women endorsed benevolent sexist ideals, the more they evaluated they were dissatisfied with their relationships when more significant problems arose. They also evaluated their relationship, as a whole, as negative on days were when they felt hurt by their partner's behavior. These findings were enhanced the longer the relationship had occurred for, in such that they felt they had invested more time and emotion resources into the relationship. Typically, longer relationships show fewer reactions to relationship problems because of the investment factor, but this was only found in those lower in benevolent sexism. This may be because rather than feeling admired for their role, these unmet expectations cause them to feel that their role is being exploited. Support of benevolent sexism means believing that men and women complete each other and fulfill each other's complementary gendered roles. If these roles are not being met, it sends a signal that there is a fundamental problem with the relationship. The researchers also noted that the problems in which women were sensitive about went beyond those which would challenge benevolent

sexist ideas. This means that high endorsement may even make it difficult for women to find even 'good' relationships satisfying. Overall this fluctuation and sensitivity to problems can cause problems with one's well-being because, as mentioned earlier, maintaining healthy relationships are important for a person's health.

There is also evidence that sexist ideologies shape how couples interact with each other in terms of conflict. Men, who held hostile views, were less open to their partner's perspective and displayed more malicious forms of communication and their partners responded similarly. Meanwhile, men who held benevolent ideals were more open, less hostile, and resolved relationships in a more adequate way. While this may seem like a benefit, one explanation for this is that benevolent sexism causes women to be more submissive, making them more complacent and easier to guide. Alternatively; benevolent sexism gives more of a driving role within relationships. This is plausible if considering gender roles, where women are expected to fulfill more social functioning roles. Meanwhile, when women endorsed benevolent sexist beliefs, but their male partner did not, women were less open, more hostile, and conversations over conflict were less successful (Overall, Sibley, & Tan 2011). This relates back to the expectations that benevolent sexism encourages, where the conflict arises when these romantic assumptions are not met. This essentially creates a situation where women feel that their partner does not see

them as special or that he is not her knight in shining armor, which incites negative feelings and anger.

In combination with the expectations benevolent sexism causes and its effects on communication, it also has shown to create more willingness to dissolve a relationship (Hammond, Overall 2014). These expectations demand that partners be warm and trustworthy, but when they are lacking in these areas, there is a partner-ideal discrepancy, which causes people to be dissatisfied within their relationship. This is particularly the problem when partners feel as if they need for these relationship ideals to match up in order to feel good about their relationship. The study by Hammond and Overall (2014), especially found that over a 3 month period, proceeded by a one year period, that those who had a greater assessment of partner-deal discrepancies, had more thoughts about ending the relationship. This effect was enhanced when partners were associated with benevolent sexism. Essentially those who held stronger benevolent sexist beliefs were less accepting and flexible in their partner falling short to their expectations and thus more willing to end the relationship.

### **Possible Benefits**

While I have explained a multitude of negative effects, benevolent sexism does have some benefits. The most apparent seems to be its shielding effect towards male violence. While this may seem contradictory, as hostile sexism increases

within a society, so does the acceptance of benevolent sexism. Since benevolent sexism treats women as objects that need special treatment and protection, it makes sense that women, who fear violence, adopt this belief; it serves as a form of protection. It still appears illogical in some way, in that, women look for safety with the same people that cause the threat. It can be said then that if there is a decrease in hostile sexism, women may be able to reject benevolent sexism without fear of violence for their retaliation. There are also economic effects, in that greater endorsement of hostile and benevolent sexism means women may be less likely to enter the workforce at a greater capacity compared to men. Benevolent sexism then guarantees women within these areas economic safety, for without the protection and aid of men, they would be unable to support themselves, let alone a family (Glick & Fiske, 2001).

With benevolent sexism being so diffuse within society, there is a strong motivation to maintain these beliefs. Some evidence has shown that it can increase life satisfaction, which provides an explanation for this motivation. Benevolent sexism provides a feeling that the system is just a fair, which then causes greater life satisfaction; this though, is system justification. Viewing life through the lens that society is unfair is infuriating, meanwhile, justification allows women to cope with these feelings by providing a sense of security and stability. Benevolent sexism's positive attitude towards women can also provide a greater sense of self-esteem and happiness (Collelly & Heesacker, 2012).

Benevolent sexism has also shown to lead men to have a greater investment in romance and family relations. In research by Good and Sanchez (2009), communal stereotypes were first primed, which created a greater endorsement of complementary gender relations and benevolent sexism. This resulted in motivation for men to appear more desirable towards women. This is partly because benevolent sexism tells men they are incomplete without women. Engaging in relations to enhance family related relationships then allows men to feel complete or even acquire some of the communal traits they lack. This can also give women the upper hand, allowing them to have a perceived superiority in communal related behaviors.

### **Discussion**

The benefits listed above though, are not separable from the negative effects mentioned previously. Benevolent sexism may create protection, economically and physically, or create a greater investment towards family, but also creates a system of reinforcement for women to adhere to gender roles, through rewards and punishments. This then only serves women who decide to conform to gendered behavior. If one wishes to not conform, they will not encounter these benefits. Even the happiness or life satisfaction it creates is arguably primarily a product of system justification. A person may subconsciously disagree with these beliefs, but use

benevolent sexism as a way to remove the unpleasant feelings this disagreeableness causes.

I would specifically like to discuss further the implications of its use for protection. One of the first points mentioned regarding relationships, related to the differences in satisfaction of pre-1965 marriages, compared to current marriages. In summary, while average marriages were more satisfying pre-1965, current marriages which satisfied higher needs, such as psychological or self-actualization needs, are significantly more satisfying. While benevolent sexism aids in protection, these are very basic needs, low on Maslow's hierarchy. This may be the only option for those who live in places where hostile sexism is high and economic mobility is difficult, but if this is explained through Maslow's hierarchy, these people then are probably not seeking out higher psychological needs if their basic needs are barely being met. Yet, if one lives in a society where this is not the case, and the only benefit is serving basic needs, they are then less likely to have a satisfying relationship. Therefore this "benefit" doesn't really seem to be overwhelmingly beneficial for modern relationships.

### **Importance For Further Research**

Most research centered on sexism has been about hostile, not benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 2001). While Glick and Fiske's research has appeared to pioneer more of a discussion on the topic, it's still widely misunderstood. Women have been found to be completely unaware of the coexistence of the two forms of

sexism (Kilianski & Rudman, 1998). Its seemingly over-complimentary nature is the most destructive problem; benevolent sexism doesn't feel like sexism. It's also consistently defended, through forms of justification, so even those who are harmed by it continue to perpetuate the cycle. Partners have also been shown to have attitude alignments, where an increase in men's values of benevolent sexism lead to an increase in women's (Hammond, Overall, & Cross, 2016) If the cycle is never broken, gender inequality will continue to persist.

### **Conclusion**

While chivalry doesn't appear to be a negative thing, it has many implications. It reinforces gender roles, creating rewards and punishments for gender typical or non-typical behavior. It also belittles the competence of women, incentivizing them to be less ambitious and perform poorly, as well as excusing violent behavior from men who appear to be benevolent. Overall, it creates dissatisfaction within relationships, led by lofty, unmet expectations. While benefits have been noted, they do not seem to counteract the overwhelmingly amount of negative effects. It would seem that, as society moves forwards, egalitarian relationships might serve as a more satisfying alternative in terms of roles and relationship structures.

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