**INTRODUCTION**

This research examines how exposure to gender stereotypic versus counter-stereotypic targets may differentially affect sexist attitudes, particularly benevolent sexism.

- **Gender stereotypic targets** may activate and confirm gender stereotypes and may thus lead to greater endorsement of ideologies supported by those stereotypes, such as benevolent sexism.
- **Counter-stereotypic targets**, in contrast, may inhibit stereotype activation by providing disconfirming evidence, consequently delegitimizing sexist attitudes.

**HYPOTHESIS**

Participants who are exposed to counter-stereotypic targets will endorse less benevolent sexism than those exposed to stereotypic targets.

**No differences are expected among hostile sexism scores because hostile sexism is not expected to be highly endorsed in the first place.**

**METHOD**

117 female and 68 male undergraduates read information about their supposed partner in a “getting acquainted” study. This information noted their partner’s gender and described their partner’s gender stereotypic or counter-stereotypic interests:

- **Julie (Michael):** HDFS major, likes to cook and go to musicals, favorite TV show is Desperate Housewives
- **Michael (Julie):** Engineering major, likes to work out and watch sports, favorite TV show is Family Guy

After reviewing their partner’s information, participants completed the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick & Fiske, 1996). The ASI scale ranged from 0 to 5, with higher numbers indicating greater levels of sexism.

**INDEPENDENT VARIABLES:**
- Participant Gender (2)
- Target Gender (2)
- Target Stereotypicality (2)

**DEPENDENT VARIABLES:**
- Benevolent Sexism (α = 0.74)
- Hostile Sexism (α = 0.78)

**RESULTS**

**Figure 1. Effects of Target Stereotypicality on Benevolent and Hostile Sexism scores**

When exposed to Counter-stereotypic (vs. Stereotypic) Targets:
- Benevolent sexism lower, \( F(1,177) = 4.57, p < 0.04 \)
- Hostile sexism, no difference, \( F < 1.02 \)

**Figure 2. Unexpected Finding**

Interaction: Participant Gender X Target Gender X Sexism Type, \( F(1,177) = 3.99, p < 0.05 \)

**RESULTS (Continued)**

Consistent with previous literature (e.g., Glick & Fiske, 1996):
- Men expressed more sexism than women,
  \( F(1,177) = 15.36, p < 0.01 \)
- Participants expressed more BS than HS,
  \( F(1,177) = 9.95, p < 0.01 \)

**SUMMARY & FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

**Predicted Results (Figure 1):**

Participants exposed to counter-stereotypic (vs. stereotypic) target endorsed less benevolent sexism, consistent with the hypothesis.

**Implications and Future Directions:**
- The results provide preliminary evidence that exposure to counterstereotypic versus stereotypic targets results in differences in self-reported sexist attitudes.
- Importantly, however, results may be driven by participants’ assumptions about their partner’s attitudes and their subsequent assimilation to those attitudes (i.e., social consensus effects), rather than by the activation of counter-stereotypic examples per se. Future research is needed to disentangle these mechanisms.
- The underlying cognitive processes by which the targets influence sexist attitudes (and the stability of these attitudinal changes across time and situations) are under current investigation.
- This research is important for understanding how stereotype portrayals perpetuate gender inequality by maintaining sexist attitudes.

**Unexpected Finding (Figure 2):**

Men exposed to male targets expressed the same amount of HS as BS, whereas in all other conditions HS < BS.

**Implications and Future Directions:**
- This result may reflect male participants’ attempts to prove their masculinity in the presence of other males, but not females.
- If men are proving their masculinity in the presence of other men, we would expect this attempt to be greater when their masculinity is threatened, compared to when it is not threatened.

**Future:**

This research will be extended to further disentangle the role of counter-stereotypic targets in reducing sexist attitudes.

**Note:**

**BS:** Benevolent sexism, **HS:** Hostile sexism.