

Code of empowerment or oppression? Factors contributing to women's perception of modern
day sexism in the workplace:

An exploratory study

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ABSTRACT

CODE OF EMPOWERMENT OR OPPRESSION? FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO WOMEN'S PERCEPTION OF MODERN DAY SEXISM IN THE WORKPLACE: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

Kimberly A. Hinman

The existence of sexism in American society is well known but seldom remedied in modern-day workplaces. One method of understanding this is to turn to third and fourth-wave feminism, which promote a meritocratic belief system, highlighting the importance of individual empowerment, personal agency, and success. Third and fourth-wave feminism have been criticized for lacking theory, as well as for inadvertently fortifying sexism by neglecting systemic and structural forces of discrimination. Coupled with the current emphasis on political correctness in American society, overt expressions of sexism (hostile sexism) have become subtler or even imperceptible (benevolent sexism). Therefore, the study explored how women internalize benevolent and hostile sexism in the workplace. The goal of the study was to investigate what women perceive is the cause of being denied a promotion at work: personal failings (internal locus of causality) or systemic external forces related to sexism (external locus of causality). The results revealed attributions of stability and controllability are important in determining causality for both hostile and benevolent sexism conditions, but not for the no sexism control condition. An advanced feminist identity is related to internalized hostile sexism when the scenario is perceived as unstable, whereas denial of sexism is related to internalized hostile sexism regardless of other factors. Both primary and advanced stages of feminist identity are related to internalized benevolent sexism when the scenario is perceived as unintentional. Meritocracy beliefs are directly related to internalized benevolent sexism. Meritocracy beliefs do

not directly impact internalization of hostile sexism after taking into account feminist identity and other attributional factors. Therefore, a sense of empowerment may be most detrimental for modern day forms of sexism.

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DEDICATION

For my mother, my rock. I could not have done this without you.

Code of empowerment or oppression? Factors contributing to women's perception of modern
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“She was warned. She was given an explanation. Nevertheless, she persisted,” quote by Senate Majority leader, Mitch McConnell, in February, 2017, concerning his rationale for silencing Senator Elizabeth Warren’s speech to Congress, is now a symbolic battle cry for women’s rights in American culture. Women and young girls fight for gender equality in America— particularly in regard to career development and advancement to leadership positions—but seldom reap the full benefits of their efforts and persistence (DiPrete & Buchmann, 2013). Americans are presently engulfed in a heated discussion surrounding gender equality, particularly in career development.

This topic is evident in the rhetoric of popular culture. For instance, Google engineer, James Damore, wrote a viral manifesto in August, 2017, claiming inherent and biological differences between men and women are the source for gender gaps in Google’s diversity, not discrimination. The media referred to Damore’s memo as “anti-diversity.” Additionally, the 2016 presidential election and subsequent Women’s March on Washington have sparked public discussion about America’s sexism and discrimination in the workplace. Questions of how gender plays a role in one’s ability to adequately fulfill job requirements, and benefit accordingly, are clearly apt for debate in modern society.

“The problem that has no name—which is simply the fact that American women are kept from growing to their full human capacities—is taking a far greater toll on the physical and mental health of our country than any known disease” (Friedan, 2010, p.495). Girls have

continued to outperform boys in academics for more than 100 years, however women (as of 2016) only earn 82 cents for every dollar a man earns (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). While this has grown from the 62 cents per dollar women were accustomed to earning in 1978, women continue to earn less than men despite equal work and job expectations, and regardless of performance standards indicating early academic success (DiPrete & Buchmann, 2013; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). A recent study of German physicians, found while women in study sample had better high school grades and similar levels of agency and career achievement motivation, compared to their male counterparts in early medical training, there was a significant difference in income measured 15 years later (Evers & Sieverding, 2014). Dishearteningly, research projects women will not receive equal pay until 2058 (The Status of Women in the States, 2015). Black women won't see pay equality until 2124, and Hispanic women will have to wait until 2248 (Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2016). In addition, women experience barriers gaining access to capital, such as bank loan approval. A recent study showed women are less likely to be approved for bank loans for mortgages or starting a business compared to men. (U.S. Senate, Committee on small Business and Entrepreneurship, 2014).

During the 1950's, many Americans believed that a woman's education was necessary only to create a well-rounded mother and wife (DiPrete & Buchmann, 2013). Additionally, while in America rising numbers of women are seeking higher education, this increase in college degrees is not coupled with a rise in gender pay equity. This suggests the stereotypes—sets of “beliefs about personal attributes of the members of a particular social category” (Hamilton, 2015 p. 13)— of men and women's roles as academics differ, such that one's expectations for the necessity of education or its utility differ between men and women.

Gender stereotypes offer commonly held beliefs about the characteristics that distinguish women from men (Hamilton, 2015). For instance, while women are seemingly supported in their efforts for higher education, stereotypically women are viewed as maternal housewives and caregivers (Epstein et al., 1999). This stereotype is reflected in the gender wage gap; women's salaries—a symbolic representation of one's value or worth—are overall less than that of men, which suggests men are believed to offer more valuable resources in a professional environment. In addition, historically women's roles have existed primarily in the domestic realm; therefore, societal messages concerning a woman's education could be viewed as suggesting her education is supplementary to her responsibilities as a partner to her significant other and mother to her children.

There is evidence that gender norms are shifting, but these shifts have proven insufficient at dissuading patriarchal views. For instance, both men and women are choosing to delay marriage (Copen et al., 2012). There is an overall decline in marriages rates. Today 81% of college educated individuals between the ages of 25 and 54 are married, compared to 85% of individuals in this age range in 1960 (Greenwood, et al., 2016). In addition, there is an influx of women entering the workforce—today 56.8% of women are employed outside of the home, compared to 37% in 1960 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). However, many still “think male—think manager” as noted by Schein (2007), the current stereotypical image of a successful leader is most often associated with a man. The current schematic shift towards egalitarianism does not prove potent enough to unhinge present gendered perspectives on career development.

The current research study seeks to add knowledge and clarify the reasoning for persistent gender stereotypes that hinder women's advancement in their chosen career paths, as well as to highlight potential protective factors to combat stereotypes. The following chapter

will critically review the current third and fourth waves of feminism. The third and fourth waves of feminism have many ties to women's career development and have been described as movements that elevate individuality, personal narratives and multiplicity (Davis, 2008). They have also been critiqued for rejecting a unifying code of womanhood, which in effect disavows sexism as the dominant societal issue and works to hide persistent sexism (Valentine, Jackson, & Mayblin, 2014).

Additionally, the following chapter will explore and seek to understand the underpinnings of how women perceive experiences of sexism. The theory of perception is studied within cognitive psychology, which focuses on the mental processes (e.g. cognition, perception, memory) involved when individuals process information about their environments. Cognitive psychology has long been studied by psychologists to understand human behavior related to career development (Lent, Brown, Hackett, 2002). For example, Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) "attempts to trace some of the complex connections between persons and their career related contexts, between cognitive and interpersonal factors, and between self-directed and externally imposed influences on career behavior" (p. 257). Based upon this theory psychologists have noted the importance of "the interplay between self-relevant thought and social processes" (p. 258).

Some theories have been developed to investigate the effects of gender on career development, for instance Gottfredson's Circumscription Theory (Brott, 1993) and SCCT has specifically investigated the effect of gender on self-efficacy related to career decision-making (Hackett & Betz, 1981). Few studies have explored the impact of sexism on women's career development (Hackett, 1997) however, the available research findings note the effects are damaging (Fernández et al., 2006). Therefore, the following chapter will outline the hitherto

prefaced problem in American culture, which is women's differential treatment in vocational fields. It will also explore factors related to this problem, specifically pertaining to modern day sexism.

Counseling psychology has historically aligned itself with a preventative focus, highlighting resiliency and protective factors that preclude individuals from dysfunction or distress (Romano & Hage, 2000). Given this, the current research study aims to explore the potential protective nature of a feminist identity in its relationship with perceptions of sexism and coping with sexism. A positive feminist identity has been noted to support women's self-esteem (Crocker & Major, 1989), in addition to reducing levels of psychological distress (Moradi & Subich, 2002). However, no known study to date has investigated the protective factors of a feminist identity within the context of third and fourth wave feminism and modern-day sexism.

Summary

American culture extols the virtues of equality, expressing "liberty and justice for all" in the Pledge of Allegiance. Current displays of oppression, such as sexism, are publicly censured and met with disdain. Women are permitted to vote alongside men, children of all races attend school together, and same sex marriage is legalized. Some believe oppression's existence is a remnant of history. While opportunities for women have grown and improved drastically, the distribution of power remains imbalanced. For instance, the gender wage gap persists (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017) and the differences between men and women in leadership positions are staggering (see for review Barreto, Ryan, & Schmitt, 2009), as an example, women hold only 23.7% of seats in congress as of 2019 (Center for American Women and Politics). The future and extent of women's advancement remains dubious, and the current wave feminism has

been critiqued for contributing to the invisibility of modern day sexism (Valentine, Jackson, & Mayblin, & 2014).

In response to this problem the present study aims to explore the current social and political environment of gender and feminism in American culture, as it pertains to and informs imbalances of power between men and women in relation to women's career advancement. One avenue for doing so is to explore women's perceptions and experiences of modern day sexism. This literature review will explore domains relevant to the present study of women's perceptions of modern day sexism in the workplace. The nature and focus of the following chapter will be to outline relevant research such that the reader gains a thorough understanding of the development and persistence of gender stereotypes, the origins of feminism and its current development and effects on women's career development, perceptions and attributions of discrimination as they are related to one's belief system, and, finally, a review of feminist identity and its function to bolster a women's ability to cope with sexism. Each domain will be explored singularly, as well as in relation to the other variables.

The study of cognition explores the thoughts individuals have about themselves, others, and their environments (Anderson, 2005). Stereotypes are an example of a cognitive mental process studied in cognitive psychology (Hamilton, 2015). The following will present an introductory overview of the cognitive value of stereotypes as understood in cognitive psychology and a brief history of the origins of the term "stereotype." This information will then be used to explore the concept of schema development and how this informs the perpetuation of discrimination against women.

The exploration of gender stereotypes will specifically entail a review of cognitive psychology to highlight the utility of stereotypes as a tool to manage one's ability to interact and

engage with their social environment (Hamilton, 2015). The chapter will also review the relevance of schema development as it relates to gender stereotypes. The introduction to a larger field of study is designed to provide a helpful framework for understanding the more specific focus of this research study, which is women's perception of sexism in the workplace.

Within the domain of feminism and its origins, the history of patriarchy will be outlined and explored as to provide a context for the impetus of the feminist movement. Additionally, relevant research on gender identity—its development and significance in one's overall social identity—will be explored. The concept of Social Identity Theory, as it relates to one's cognitive understanding of their social identity, will be introduced and explored to better understand women's experience of social identity threat—as an oppressed identity group. The literature review will then explore extant research pertaining to women's experiences of sexism within the workplace.

The literature review will subsequently move on to the distinct and successive waves of feminism, outlining each wave's particular schema and definition of gender discrimination. The current schema of gender discrimination, characterizing the third and fourth waves of feminism, will be explored in its relationship with the current egalitarian focus in American society. Implications of the cultural shift towards outward egalitarianism will be discussed as they pertain to women's career development.

Relatedly, the next topic of review is modern day sexism; the chapter will specifically explore how society's current display of sexist ideology is affected by egalitarian belief systems and subjugated to more covert expressions versus previous overt expressions. The review of modern day sexism will particularly focus on benevolent sexism based upon the Ambivalent Sexism Theory (Glick & Fiske, 1996). After providing relevant context to understand

contemporary displays of sexism, a review of overall perception of discrimination will be explored. To better understand how individuals make causal attributions to events the Attribution Theory of achievement motivation (Weiner, 1985) will be outlined and introduced as the grounding theory supporting the study's proposed analyses. Specifically, relevant research on locus of causality in one's attributions of discrimination will be outlined. Research highlighting the relationship between locus of causality and meritocracy beliefs will also be reviewed. Meritocracy beliefs will be reviewed in relation to the tenets of third and fourth wave feminism, specifically exploring the "code of empowerment" (Rennison, 2014)—a championed ideology in both waves of feminism.

The ideology of third and fourth wave feminism will be reviewed and critiqued for its seeming tendency to sustain patriarchy and oppress women, specifically in relation to women's career advancement. The tenets of third and fourth wave feminism in relation to an internal locus of causality and meritocracy beliefs will also be explored. The potential harmful relationship of these variables in connection to one's ability to perceive modern day sexism will also be investigated. Lastly, the literature review will explore the concepts of a feminist identity. Extant research noting the significance and utility of a feminist identity in buffering against the negative impacts of sexism will be introduced and reviewed. In the conclusion of the literature review, the reader will be introduced to specific research questions of the current investigation. Given the nature of the research questions the literature review will focus on and refer to cisgender women in relation to cisgender men.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cognitive Psychology and Stereotypes

The aforementioned shifts in American gender roles have not meaningfully dented the “think male, think manager” paradigm (Schein, 2007), which suggests that progress on the latter front is not inevitable. Because of the tenacity of gender stereotypes, it is necessary to understand both how stereotypes develop and are sustained across time. Further, it is necessary to explore the effect gender stereotypes have on women’s career development and how women cope with the deleterious effects of such stereotypes. One avenue for such exploration is cognitive psychology, which sheds light on the mental processes (e.g. cognition, perception, memory) involved when individuals process information about their environments.

Individuals process information as a method of evaluating and understanding one’s relationship within the present social context. Given the enormity of sensory information with which one interacts at every moment, human brains have developed a short cut, which allows individuals to process information more efficiency (Lindsay & Norman, 2013), otherwise the environment would prove too chaotic and as a species, humans would experience a diminished survival rate in the face of any threat. To adapt, individuals quickly discriminate which information requires their immediate attention and which can be filtered out. The information one attends to and encodes into their memory is decided based upon the relevance of the sensory information. Information that is deemed relevant is then stored in one’s memory and used to form what are known as schemas—abstract guides or cognitive structures that allow individuals to understand novel situations by using previously learned information regarding similar phenomena (Hamilton, 2015; Galotti, 2017; Summers, 2016).

For example, an individual can develop a schema for women, which contains all beliefs and knowledge one has about women. An individual develops these schemas through direct, personal interactions with women, indirectly through vicarious learning from others' interactions with women, as well as from societal schemas for women (Hamilton, 2015; Galotti, 2017; Summers, 2016). Information that is congruent with the beliefs and characteristics of a schema is processed faster than incongruent information (Hamilton, 2015). For instance, a discussion concerning a woman's nurturing of a young child would be processed faster if one held the belief that women are inherently nurturing, compared to a discussion about a woman's career. The latter would be processed faster if one held the belief that women are inherently goal directed and career driven.

Schemas provide individuals with the capacity to understand new and old information (Summers, 2016) as well as relationships among various pieces of information (Galotti, 2017). Understanding information processing—the flow of sensory information from the environment, some, of which we attend to and process through various memory systems, and some that we do not—and its relationship with stereotypes may clarify the motivating forces perpetuating gender inequality in America. Understanding the historical context of the term stereotype is helpful in illuminating its meaning in modern culture.

Stereotypes. Didot, a French printer, first used the word stereotype in 1798 to describe a printing process that required a uniformity of repeated material to be reproduced (Hamilton, 2015). In the late 19th century, psychiatrists, in reference to persistent and ritualized behaviors, used the term *stereotypy*. In 1922, Lippmann's *Public Opinion* introduced the word stereotype into Social Psychology literature. Lippmann posited individuals “do not respond directly to external reality” (Lippmann, 1965, p. 2) but to a “pseudoenvironment,” i.e. a representation of

the environment in their minds, which is created using stereotypes. Stereotypes help individuals explain and rationalize their social environment in a simplified manner to ease information processing. For example, individuals cannot remember specific details about all members in a group; therefore, individuals generalize information about and perceptions of a group. This generalization is the basis for schemas and stereotypes. It is important to note, that stereotypes are not effortfully crafted in one's mind, rather, as an individual socializes and learns how to cognitively organize their environment, they automatically employ schemas that categorize information.

While cognitive psychology outlines the importance and utility of schemas and stereotypes in relation to information processing, a more insidious side of stereotypes and their impact on individuals also exists. Merton (1948) asserted, stereotypes are the result of a “self-fulfilling prophecy” in which an original false definition concerning a situation becomes true due to an individual's actions and involvement in the situation. Merton went on to assert, the existence of racism between Blacks and Whites in America was due to a self-fulfilling prophecy. He offers the example of Black men seeking entrance into northern trade unions, which were comprised of only White men. “Many Americans of good will are (sometimes reluctantly) brought to retain enduring ethnic and racial prejudices. They experience these beliefs, not as prejudices, not as prejudgments, but as irresistible products of their own observation” Merton wrote (1948, p. 196). He expanded upon this sentiment by noting, White men have rationalized their exclusion of Black men from unions due to Black men's nature as “strikebreakers” and their inability to work in trade unionism due to their willingness to accept low paying jobs, which thus prevented a “collective bargain” from occurring between workers and employers on salaries. However, White men “fail to see, of course, that he and his kind have produced the

very ‘facts’ which he observes” (p. 196), by excluding Black men from unions they leave no other option but for Black men to accept jobs for far lower pay, when White men are on strike, thereby undercutting the union’s ability to collectively bargain for higher wages.

The inaccuracy of stereotypes, coupled with the persistence in which they are employed, maintains a system of oppression for many individuals. Stereotypes have been called “exaggerations or caricatures of social reality” (Judd & Park, 1993, p. 110); additionally, stereotypes are grounded in the positive bias towards one’s in-group and therefore a negative bias towards one’s out-group. It is suggested that stereotypes exist to maintain the power structure within patriarchy, which places White men in a superior position to other out-groups. For instance, a study by Beyer and Gross (1996) found evidence for the persistence of the inaccurate stereotype, that men are more likely to attend post-secondary education. Participants inaccurately judged the percentage of both men and women in college majors by underestimating the percentage of women and overestimating the percentage of men in stereotypical masculine majors (e.g., computer science, chemistry, biology, history, math, and political science).

Additionally, the researchers found, students overestimated male grade point averages (GPAs), especially in stereotypically masculine majors. Further, women, while holding higher GPAs regardless of major, engaged in inaccurate stereotyping more frequently than men, which suggests women have little awareness of their own abilities and competence in relation to their male peers (Beyer & Gross, 1996). To better understand this phenomenon, we turn to a review of Social Identity Theory, which provides additional insight into the damaging consequences of stereotypes on one’s identity development, and is particularly important to understand in relation to women’s career development.

Social Identity Theory

In support of the previous statement concerning the utility of stereotypes, Social Identity Theory (SIT) holds that individuals tend to cognitively organize themselves and others into social categories, including gender, age, or membership in an organization (Tajfel & Turner, 1985). This process of categorization provides an organization of the social environment, which reduces an individual's cognitive load—the amount of mental effort one exerts (Paas, et al., 2003)—during information-processing tasks. In addition to classifying other individuals in an expedited manner, SIT posits individuals also self-categorize as a means to locate oneself in a social environment (Stets & Burke, 2000). Self-categorization, in part derived from one's group identification, aids in developing an individual's self-image (Ellemers & Haslam, 2011; Stets & Burke, 2000, Tajfel & Turner, 1985). Therefore, individuals develop much of their sense of self from the social categorization to which they belong (Stets & Burke, 2000).

Individuals are prone to define and categorize themselves in relation to individuals in other categories (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). For instance, the categorization of *woman* is given meaning in its relation to the category of *man*. Further, the extent to which an individual identifies with a particular category is not dichotomous but rather a gradation based on the amount of attributes an individual identifies with within each category (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Thus, gender identity “refers to the extent to which a person experiences oneself to be like others of one gender” (Steensma, et al., 2013, p. 289). For example, the amount that a woman identifies with her female gender is based upon the number of “feminine” attributes she ascribes to. Further, because gender is defined and given its meaning through one's culture, and not based upon one's biological sex at birth, a continuum of gender identity characteristics ranging from masculine to feminine exists. Women can identify with both masculine and feminine traits.

Their categorization is not uniform or without variance. Over time and depending on one's environmental context the categorization may change (Wood & Eagly, 2015).

Through the lens of SIT, one can understand the cognitive utility of relying on stereotypes and applying characteristics to individuals based on the particular category or group with which they are associated. In an effort to improve the efficiency of one's ability to compile information from the environment, individuals automatically employ stereotypes based on known information about a particular group of individuals. However, given the damaging nature of gender stereotypes, and variability with which women categorized themselves with either femininity or masculinity, this method of interacting with one's environment and self-discovery proves harmful for women and other minority groups. The next chapter will outline the history of patriarchy and shed light on its influence on the development of stereotypes about men and women in American culture.

History of Patriarchy

Unfortunately, the current stereotypes of men and women in American culture act to perpetuate oppression against women and maintain patriarchy, because within this social categorization a power structure exists, in which some categories have "more or less power, prestige, status, and so on" compared to others (Stets & Burke, 2000, p. 225). Patriarchy is a system of "male domination and female subordination" (Hunnicut, 2009, p. 553). It can be understood through the lens of Conflict Theory, which describes the natural inclination of individuals to continually strive for increased social status, thereby coming into conflict with one another as they attempt to maximize their advantages (Hunnicut, 2009). For instance, the theory postulates individuals are in constant pursuit of their own self-interest, thereby creating a society built upon hierarchy and dominance, because as one group in society struggles for power, they

assert their dominance over another group. Patriarchy is not the only system of hierarchy within American culture, this is also noted in racism, ageism, classism, etc., in which one group dominates another. Women are not the only group to experience oppression, but the majority of the U.S. population is women (50.4%, World Bank, 2017), and the current political environment has proven to be overly hostile towards women. Given this, it is increasingly necessary to elucidate the forces sustaining patriarchy.

Patriarchy has a long-standing history in Western society, dating back to the ancient Greek definition—“the rule of the father.” The term was notably used in reference to herding cultures of the Hebrew Bible, in which the father figure held ultimate authority over the family (LeGates 2012). Further, Western society’s history is told through benchmarks of political and military significance, in which men hold primary authority. Although, there are noteworthy female historical figures such as Joan of Arc and Catherine the Great, what characterizes these women as significant was their temporary participation in “masculine pursuits” (p. 13). Erich Fromm noted the similarity and influence patriarchy has within the home and upon public domains of social justice and legislation, in which it places men in a status of leadership and authority over both their family and other social groups (Hunnicut, 2009).

Additionally, women in many ways are incentivized to maintain patriarchy due to the respect and protection they receive by upholding male superiority over women (Hunnicut, 2009). White women especially, given their relationship with White men as their daughters, wives, sisters etc., are incentivized to maintain patriarchy through their “economic cushion” and privilege over women of color (Hurtado, 1989). Meaning, White women have historically experiences less economic hardship than other women in the United States. For instance, women who follow traditional gender norms are offered protection from men in return for their

compliance (Hunnicut, 2009). Defining women as innately more susceptible to danger or weakness and men as intrinsically secure and powerful maintains men's dominance and power over women. Further this pattern of protection and service to women is noted in chivalrous acts, in which men are socialized to follow a code of conduct, which condones the expression of courage and courteousness to women. The pattern, while seemingly beneficial to women, "renders women powerless" (Hunnicut, 2009, p. 565) and maintains a system in which women are dependent upon men. An example of this is benevolent sexism, which stereotypes women as positively pure and warm, but incompetent and in need of men's protection (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Therefore, control over women is cloaked in their supposed inherent vulnerabilities and need for protection. The topic of benevolent sexism will be explored in further detail below.

Gender Identity. To better elucidate the development and persistence of the chivalrous behavior as noted above, it may prove beneficial to further understand the concept of gender identity, which is a reflection of one's "understanding of themselves in terms of cultural definitions of female and male" (Wood & Eagly, 2015, p. 1). Given the salience gender has within American culture, exploring how gender roles are transmitted and internalized developmentally for individuals, may shed light on the perpetuation of sexism.

American culture places a high value on the salience of gender in a person's identity development. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the antecedents of discrimination against women and their negative consequences, in hopes of interrupting oppressive forces against women. Immediately after birth, children's gender socialization is set into motion, marked by various symbolic representations of "boy" or "girl". This is evident in language used to describe the child's physical characteristics—boys are often praised for their strength and agility, while girls for their delicate nature and daintiness (Carter, 2014). Through the process of socialization,

these descriptions become boundaries for behavior and self-understanding for boys and girls, which are internalized and become “identity standards,” which dictate the way one begins to understand his or her identity development. Gender identity is understood as the ability to label oneself and others based upon cisgender male, female (Bussey & Bandura, 1999), or transgender identities.

Sigmund Freud first described the separate nature of biological sexual development from societal gender development (Carter, 2014; Stockard, 2006). He posited a boy’s gender identity development was an active separation from “acting feminine”, which boys were more inclined towards given their closeness with their primary caregiver—their mother (Stockard, 2006). “Children learn what acceptable behavior for specific circumstances is, and what is *never* acceptable” (Carter, 2014, p. 246). The messages of acceptable behavior differ for boys and girls—boys learn they must be the opposite of their mother, condemning femininity as socially devalued, thereby reinforcing a superiority of masculine traits.

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) of gender role development suggests conceptions about acceptable gender role behavior are the product of social influences (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). In contrast to Freud’s understanding of gender development as occurring primarily during early development, SCT of gender postulates gender development is not confined to childhood but continually forms and develops over the course of one’s lifetime. The theory highlights the significance modeling has upon gender identity development, noting from childhood, infants begin to regulate their behavior based upon socially sanctioned standards. Observations of others’ behaviors convey rules for appropriate ways of interacting with the world based upon one’s gender identity (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). Specifically, observations of other’s successes or failures convey information that is used to develop self-efficacy beliefs about oneself. Self-

efficacy—or one’s confidence in successfully completing a particular task—is based upon one’s expectations of either a positive or negative outcome resulting from an event. Therefore, women’s self-efficacy beliefs are tied to socially sanctioned rules about gendered behavior. This relationship will be further explored below.

These messages about one’s identity, in relation to gender, are ubiquitous across one’s lifetime, marked by various gendered activities from household tasks to career choices (Carter, 2014). This is sometimes defined as “doing gender” (West & Zimmerman, 1987), highlighting the active nature of embodying one’s gender identity. Further, given the gratifying nature of cognitive consistency—having beliefs that are consistent with one’s self-concept—individuals seek out opportunities to behave in ways that are consistent with beliefs about their gender (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). However, this perpetuates current oppressive gender stereotypes. SCT of gender notes vicarious learning and observation of others also contributes to gender development through motivation and policing behavior. For instance, when a young girl witnesses a young boy ridiculed for playing with dolls, while concurrently observing other young girls praised for this behavior, this instills an incentive for her to engage in gendered activities of playing with dolls, given she learns she will receive social rewards as a result from this gendered behavior. It is important to note, modeling does not occur in isolation or individually but rather “modeling is a major social mechanism through which behavioral patterns, social roles, and sociostructural arrangements get replicated across generations” (Bussey & Bandura, 1999, p. 689).

As previously noted, self-efficacy beliefs are closely tied to one’s gender identity (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). SCT outlines how individuals learn about themselves and socially appropriate behavior based upon vicarious learning and observations of those perceived as

similar to oneself. Self-efficacy beliefs are also products of vicarious learning, in that when young girls and women observe another woman succeed through sustained effort at a particular task, for instance career development, this increases her beliefs about her own capabilities in her career development. Similarly, witnessing few women succeed in career development (*vis-à-vis* men), or observing women frequently fail in their career advances, will instill in a woman self-doubt concerning her own ability to succeed. Self-efficacy beliefs influence a woman's aspirations, perseverance, and resilience to adversity. As revealed in the literature, self-efficacy beliefs significantly affect the career choices and development of men and women (Bandura, 1997; Hackett & Betz 1995), further research notes women's self-efficacy beliefs are largely determined by social influences such as family values, educational values, messages from the media, and the overall culture and stereotypes about women in American culture (Bussey & Bandura, 1999).

Given this, and the pervasiveness of gendered activity in a variety of environments and social contexts, the notion of gender identity development becomes important when considering its impact on social identity threat. Social identity threat occurs upon recognition of how a specific social identity one holds (e.g., women) proves to jeopardize or threaten a positive sense of self, whereby in comparison to other social groups (e.g., men) one feels less than or subservient to the comparison group (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002). Social identity threat is understood as the perception that one's group's characteristics are not valued by society.

Women and Social Identity Threat

One's identity is formed based upon social comparisons with others (Festinger, 1954), in which one identifies with an in-group in reference to an out-group. Social groupings are often based upon gender in popular culture—for instance, the National Organization for Women

(N.O.W), fraternities vs. sororities, and traditional gentlemen's clubs. Therefore, it is important to underscore the salience of gender in one's identity development (Carter, 2014). The integration of gender and identity becomes detrimental when we investigate gender stereotypes, which are internalized in the process of identity development. Stereotypes of men include: being competent, valuable, dominant, competitive, and autonomous in comparison to stereotypes of their female contemporaries: being submissive, cooperative, incapable, compassionate, expressive, and not to be taken seriously (Cater, 2014).

Unfortunately, in American culture, women continue to confront sexism—"an agile, dynamic, changing and diverse set of malleable representations," (Gill, 2014, p. 517) in which gender discrimination is practiced. In fact, research has shown the more contact women have with men in the workplace the more they report sexual harassment experiences (Gruber, 1998). Therefore, it is important to understand how women are coping with sexism, specifically in relation to their career development.

Experience of Sexism and Women's Development

"Our identities are formed and our lives are lived in ceaseless negotiation with oppressive forces" (Bearman, Korobox, & Thorne, 2009, p. 13). To understand how sexism affects women's career development, it is important to first understand how oppression operates at a group level to further propagate domineering forces. In American society, some individuals hold more power and have easier access to resources than others. Oppression occurs when individuals differ systematically in their access to support and in their experiences of stress in daily life (Bearman, et al., 2009). Oppression is maintained by the mistreatment of individuals, both at an individual and institutional level, based on their group membership (Freire, 1970).

Further, as Foucault (1980) outlines, power inequalities are not static forces, but ideals, which are perpetuated through shared beliefs and values in society.

In a society such as ours, but basically in any society, there are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterize, and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated, nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation, and functioning of a discourse. (Foucault, 1980, 93-94).

Therefore, it is important to understand how cultural values, which are shared and transmitted across individuals, groups, and generations, allow prejudiced ideals to prevail. Oppression is reinforced in American ideology by legitimizing rhetoric of those in positions of authority (Amis, Munir, & Mair, 2017). For instance, the “American Dream” and myth of meritocracy valuing class mobility in American culture through hard work and tenacity is persistent despite conflicting actualities of class inequality and disparity.

Similarly, sexism, which is defined as the institutional power differential between men and women, in that men systematically deny power to women, persists due to the origins of patriarchy, as discussed above, despite evidence to the contrary of men and women’s equal career motivation and matched or superior academic achievement (Evers & Sieverding, 2014). Further, given White women’s relative proximity to White men, the denial of power has also been instigated by White women towards Women of color (WOC) (Hurtado, 1989). Early theories of feminism, specifically during the first wave of feminism—described in greater detail below—highlight the experiences and stories of White women as universal and exclude the experiences of WOC (Hurtado, 1989). Evidence of the essentialist point of view is noted in Carol Gilligan’s research on early developmental changes among adolescent girls (Gilligan, 2013). She posits a girl’s sense of knowing, along with assertive and confident tendencies, revert to deference and submission through adolescence (Bearman, Korobok, & Thorne, 2009;

Gilligan, 2013). However, Gilligan has been criticized for her insensitivity to race and class differences (Schneider, 1987).

In her research, Gilligan (2013) discusses how White-middle class young girls are forced to silence their honest voices, “in order to be accepted and loved” (p. 37). She emphasizes that while this silencing may be socially adaptive, it is coupled with sincere psychological costs. Gilligan highlights, White-middle class, young girls lose their willingness to be outspoken, to speak their minds and through adolescence this turns to fear of endangering relationships with others if they use their voices and speak “what they know.” Therefore, through this socialization, one way a White-middle class woman may engage in “doing gender” is by actively suppressing her voice and opinions in a public sphere, such as the workplace.

Gilligan has described this process of White-middle class girls as “going underground” however, this coping strategy is not afforded to girls of color, instead they “must learn how to assert themselves within White, often-male dominated institutions, because they know that these institutions are often not designed to protect them or promote their interests” (Leadbetter, 1996, p. 16). Based upon their research with young urban, girls of color, researchers found silence is best understood not as a passivity but as “a form of resistance and a means of protection” (p. 25). Many girls in the study questioned the meaning of people’s actions and were especially wary of authority figures’ ability to help in times of need. Many girls in the study identified a personal awareness of differences between her individual needs and that of her community, thereby engaging in a process of deconstructing her social environment. The study also highlighted the variations and differences between students of color, noting they “defy simple categorization” and called for additional research on within group differences of girls of color.

Therefore, the definition of culturally sanctioned femininity is diverse and has different

applications depending on the context in which a young girl's development takes place. However, it is clear the act of ascribing to culturally sanctioned femininity is important to understand, when considering the antecedents of perceiving sexist events, specifically in the workplace, and particularly how this may differ for WOC and White women. For instance, women may be less likely to question status quo gender roles, especially if they have been socialized to endorse their gender by suppressing their voices and opinions or question the availability and access to resources. This tendency of women to silence themselves as a way of understanding and engaging in their gender identity proves detrimental to the overall feminist movement, however the current research largely speaks to the development of White women. In an effort to better understand the current social and political context of the feminist movement, the following chapter will provide a historical review of the four separate movements, also known as "waves," of feminism.

The Four Waves of Feminism

The feminist movement was born in reaction to perceived inequalities between men and women, both in the private sphere at home and in the public sphere at work. Feminism was developed by privileged, White, middle-class women out of an awareness of women's relative deprivation during the Industrial Revolution in both America and France (LeGates, 2012, Scholz, 2012). Women became aware of injustices between themselves and their husbands and sons, noting opportunities arose at differential rates for women and men. Men were granted opportunities to seek employment outside of the house and earn a wage, while women were encouraged to maintain domesticity and stay at home. This further conflicted with western cultural beliefs of independence and self-fulfillment in that women were becoming aware of their dependence on men in their lives, and this stymied a sense of independence from men.

First-Wave: 19th and early 20th Century. Sarah Grimké, first wave feminist leader and herald of the movement's message, stated:

I ask no favors for my sex. I surrender not our claim to equality. All I ask of our brethren is, that they take their feet off our necks, and permit us to stand upright on that ground which God designated us to occupy. (Grimké & Parker, 1838, p. 10).

The first wave of feminism, lasting from the mid 19th century to the early 20th century, was born out of the belief that all women share the same experiences under patriarchy, and this shared oppression can bind women together to combat gender discrimination—this view point focused on commonality is known as *essentialism* (LeGates, 2012). Beginning in 1848, women fought for equal opportunities in the political community, including various forms of protection (e.g., protection of housing, protection of one's person, protection of privacy), liberties (e.g., to speak freely, gather with others, practice one's religion), and the right to participate in governmental rule (e.g., voting or running for public office) (DuBois, 1999; Scholz, 2012). The women's suffrage movement—now known as the first wave of feminism and liberal feminism—developed out of women's academic circles, and “ladies' benevolent societies” in which women shared similar discontents and grievances and began to challenge traditional gender norms.

Due to the growth of industrial capitalism at this time, community life experienced a shift away from the patriarchal dynamics between a husband and wife within the family home, to a political focus orchestrated and conducted by men in the public sphere (DuBois, 1999). Social recognition of women waned as the focus of community life moved outside the domestic domain. This shift motivated women to seek out more recognition in community life by fighting for increases in their political rights. Following the aspirations for racial equality set forth by the Civil War, “feminists came to recognize that the only force capable of bringing about radical change in the condition of women's lives was the organized power of women themselves”

(DuBois, 1999, p. 19). Originally, the abolitionist movement and the feminist movement were combined—the women’s antislavery movement was spawned by women’s dissatisfaction with their isolating domestic lives—and women’s suffrage leaders Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, gained significant knowledge about seeking gender equality from the ideology of the antislavery movement. However, the leaders sought to distance the women’s suffrage movement from the abolitionism movement given their desire to focus purely on women’s suffrage and sentiments that women’s enfranchisement would not gain momentum unless it was an independent political base. Therefore, the first wave of feminism was composed of primarily white, middle-class women (DuBois, 1999; Scholz, 2012).

Many White women suffragists of the first-wave of has been criticized for their “racist, nativist, and elitist tendencies” (Chávez et al., 2010, p. 16). The rights and needs of working class, immigrant, and Black women were discounted by pioneers of first-wave feminism. While seemingly invisible at the time, the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society was known as an organization that shared leadership positions between free Black women and White women to advocate for the rights of both slaves and women at the time. In 1832, Maria Stewart—a free-born Black woman—spoke out concerning the economic struggles Black women faced. Stewart was forthright about her distaste for White women’s relegation of women of color’s (WOCs) rights. Additionally, southern born, aristocratic, White sisters Angelina and Sarah Grimké continued the plight of Stewart, speaking out on the connection between the social status of slaves and women. The efforts of these women and others in the Philadelphia Anti-Slavery Society grew into the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women in 1837, which married the fight for liberation of slaves and women alike (Chávez et al., 2010).

Second-Wave: 1960's to early 1980's. The first-wave of feminism granted women autonomy in public and political spheres through gaining women's right to vote in 1920 (Moran, 2004). While some feminists continue to define the feminist movement in this way, others have criticized the movement for dismissing the differential experiences of White women and WOC under patriarchy. Again White, married, middle-class women largely drove second-wave feminism. However, while it was strikingly less multicultural than the present and third-wave of feminism, prominent second-wave feminist authors include WOC such as Gloria Anzaluda, Cherrie Moraga, and Audre Lorde (Snyder, 2008).

The second-wave of feminism welcomed more diversity than the previous essentialist view of first-wavers; however, it left many women feeling unfulfilled by the binary view of gender, heteronormativity, and fundamentally color-blind attitudes. The National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO) was formed in 1973 out of the necessity to develop an organization that highlighted the unique experience of WOC (River, 1983). In essence, the term *intersectionality* first coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), was born out of second-wave feminism and the goals of the NBFO to highlight Black women's experiences of mutually oppressed identities. The term originated to conceptualize "how race, gender, class, and sexuality interact in complex ways that shape subjects and institutions alike." (Nash, 2011, p 446).

The second-wave sought for women's economic agency (Moran, 2004), and highlighted the dilemma women faced in their desire for independence, combined with American society's unyielding focus on marriage and family (Heywood & Drake, 1997). Second-wave goals included equality for women in the workplace and freeing women from the authority of their husbands. The second-wave largely focused on heteronormative viewpoints, seeking to improve

the lives of heterosexual, married women and neglected the needs of single women or women who did not identify as heterosexual. In reaction to this, the Combahee River Collective was formed, out of a critique of the NBFO for its homophobic rhetoric and neglect of Black lesbians (Nash, 2011).

The second-wave movement maintained the essentialist ideals from the first-wave, espousing the belief that by engaging in consciousness-raising sessions where women share common experiences under patriarchy, women could become worldlier and more knowledgeable about the oppression women experience (Snyder, 2008). Therefore second-wave feminists focused on face-to-face meetings in which women were encouraged to share their own narratives surrounding unequal divisions of household labor, male-centered sexual practices, and domestic violence. From these structured meetings, many feminist books were written, which further spawned the movement and distributed knowledge and consciousness-raising amongst women.

The first and second-waves of feminism are both characterized by collective action movements questioning the notion of what it means to be human (Scholz, 2012). Second-wave feminism can be understood as a continuation of the first wave's focus on public recognition of women as equal to men. The second-wave focused on legal, economic, and social equality for largely White women, while striving to highlight structural privileges granted to men in American society. The third-wave of feminism goes further to highlight the paradox between the seeming gender-neutral stance of American culture and the male dominance pervasive in the American language, norms, values, and consciousness, therefore obscuring oppression of women (Scholz, 2012).

Issues focused upon by Black feminists moved from the outskirts of the second-wave ideology to the forefront of feminism in the 1990's, after the formal introduction of the term

intersectionality (Crenshaw, 2019) and Patricia Hill Collins's work in *Black Feminist Thought* (2002). The work of both Crenshaw and Collins highlights the significance and importance of understanding Black women's experiences of intersectionality to "reveal something significant—and otherwise unknown—about power's workings." (Nash, 2011, p. 456). Marking the beginning of the third-wave of feminism, Black feminism was ushered into the academic realm and the intellectual study of intersectionality spread across multiple disciplines.

Third-Wave: Early 1990's to 2012. The efforts of Black feminists are in many ways to credit for launching the multicultural focus that drove third-wave feminism. The third-wave of feminism, which began in the 1990's, is characterized by women's "entitle[ment] to interact with men as equals, claim sexual pleasure as they desire it (heterosexual and otherwise), and actively play with femininity" (Snyder, 2008, p179). Third-wavers pride themselves on inclusivity, among races, ethnicities, religions, etc., placing diversity at the forefront of their identity (Scholz, 2012; Snyder, 2008). Third-wave feminists reject norms, on the basis that normative standards often center certain traits and marginalize individuals who do not meet particular standards (Scholz, 2012). Given that the third-wave aims to eliminate categories that can marginalize individuals, normative standards are untenable. For example, many third-wave feminists endorse the application of beauty products or plastic surgery as a form of self-expression, while second-wave feminisms would condemn this behavior as subservience to heteronormative and oppressive beauty standards. Further, some third-wave feminists argue the endorsement of femininity challenges traditional socio-historical definitions and associations of femininity with meekness and submissiveness (Baumgardner & Richards, 2004). Instead women are sent the message that they can "have it all"—be both feminine and political and do not need to choose a category. Third-wave feminism does not dictate normative behavior or provide a

singular definition feminism, instead it highlights one's ability to define their own feminism (Heywood & Drake 1997). This often translates into individual strivings for success, as opposed to collective strivings towards success as embraced by earlier waves (Iannello, 2010). The third-wave's language of empowerment and individual choice, has been criticized for breeding increased self-scrutiny and assessment of one's own life by encouraging women to be "both progressive but also consummately and reassuringly feminine" (McRobbie, 2009, p. 57).

However, others pride third-wave feminism as personally defined within each individual, as it pertains to her own individual discovery and pursuit of self-fulfillment, through asserting what is right for herself above all else (Budgeon, 2011). This contrasts with essentialism, which highlighted the unifying and innate qualities of womanhood and acted as the primary focus of first and second-wave feminism (Heywood & Drake, 1997). Given that the previous definition of feminism felt invalidating to many women, specifically those who did not identify as White and middle class, the third-wave of feminism focuses on celebrating differences among woman.

In celebration of differences, third-wave feminism has rejected a normative category of women, instead valuing "personal narratives" and intersectionality—the "interaction between gender, race, and other categories of difference in individual lives...and the outcomes of these interaction in terms of power" (Davis, 2008, p. 69). The movement praises multiple perspectives as opposed to an essentialist understanding of feminism. An organizing force of the third-wave formed out of a collective dislike of confining binaries or conforming identities that proved harmful for interracial, transgender, bisexual individuals, or others that strive against categorization. In reaction to the exclusive and invalidating notions, which characterized previous feminist movements, the third-wave rejects an organizing force beyond an individual's own definition of feminism for themselves.

However, this shift away from an essentialist point of view has been criticized for contributing to the invisibility and relegation of sexism, undermining its continued problematic presence in today's society (Valentine, Jackson, & Mayblin, 2014). "In popular culture...there is a process which says feminism is no longer needed, it is now common sense, and as such it is something young women can do without" (McRobbie, 2009, p. 8). Additionally, third-wave feminism has been criticized for lacking theory or an organizing foundation such as essentialism, instead the movement has taken on an "anti-essentialist" foundation, which may be best understood as the notion that, "there is no one way to be a woman" (Synder, 2008, p. 185). Third-wave feminism coupled with the current focus on political correctness in American culture (Hughes, 2011) may have led to women unknowingly being subjected to sexism and maintaining patriarchy.

Fourth-Wave: 2012-present. The fourth-wave, while in its infancy in the academic realm, is sparking a revival of mainstream feminism, which finds itself center-stage on the Internet and technology based platforms (Cochrane, 2013; Maclaran, 2015; Rivers, 2017; Zimmerman, 2017). The fourth-wave gained further traction during the 2016 presidential election, wherein candidate Hillary Clinton, first female presidential candidate in United States history, brought gender inequality, specifically in the professional realm, to the forefront of many individual's minds (Zimmerman, 2017). While the concerns of the fourth-wave are similar to that of the third-wave, the difference lies in the medium of which information and ideology is transmitted. The fourth-wave, which finds itself primarily in the digital world, is growing attention through online mediums such as Twitter and Reddit (Rivers, 2017; Zimmerman, 2017), has led to what is known as 'hashtag feminism' (Dixon, 2014).

Hashtag feminism can be understood as developing out of discussion board communities, where individuals—often of marginalized identities—share information, narratives and experiences and coalesce under a shared viewpoint (Dixon, 2014). The fourth-wave is characterized by trending hashtag movements such as #YesAllWomen, #bringbackourgirls, #NotoriousRBG, and #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen (Rivers, 2017).

The #bringbackourgirls hashtag was created by Ramaa Mosley, a Los Angeles film director, who sought a way to increase activism surrounding the abduction of more than two-hundred Nigerian school girls in April 2014 (Dixon, 2014). She spoke about feeling helpless and utilizing social media to “shout out” to her friends concerning the topic. She next decided to “shout out” to President Barak Obama and through the ubiquitous nature of social media her message went viral (i.e., being used more than 800,000 times in the US).

The #NotoriousRBG hashtag—a play on rapper Biggie Smalls’ Notorious B.I.G. nickname—was coined by New York University law student, Shana Knizhnik in response to the Ruth Bader Ginsberg’s dissent in the landmark Supreme Court case *Shelby County v. Holder* (Brinlee, 2018). The hashtag quickly rose to prominence, seemingly overnight, and was the inspiration for the New York Times bestselling book, “Notorious RBG: The Life and Times of Ruth Bader Ginsburg” (Carmon & Knizhnik, 2015). The authors, two young, White women, were inspired by the ideals and message of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg’s dissenting opinions to many conservative supreme court rulings. The Supreme Court Justice has become a symbol of fourth-wave feminism through her adamant and unapologetic belief in gender equality, as well as equality for all minority identities. In summary of the book the authors write, “Nearly a half-century into being a feminist and legal pioneer, something funny happened to Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg: the octogenarian won the internet.”

This quote highlights an important role the internet plays in the current wave of feminism. The informal nature of hashtag feminism allows a wide girth of women and men to engage in discussions and renew interest in feminism.

Further, the internet has been lauded for creating a “call out culture” in which issues such as sexism can be challenged through online media (Munro, 2013). Barnard Center for Research on Women, in collaborating with Columbia University launched a project entitled, #FemFuture: Online Feminism (Martin & Valenti, 2012). The study found women (18-29 years old) are using digital spaces at increasing rates, this is further corroborated by Twitter's increasing user base. The division between online and offline scholarship in feminist theory is brought into question in the fourth-wave, as Zimmerman (2017) notes, advantages of the digital platform include offering “marginalize and disenfranchised [individuals] a substantial space to voice dissent and social outrage and to politically organize” (p. 59).

The writings of the fourth-wave are not written by solely middle-class, educated, White women through scholarly journals. Instead bloggers and journalists are stepping into the fore. Kira Cochrane, British journalist and opinion editor at *The Guardian*, writes that many individuals at the forefront of the fourth-wave, are young women in their teens and early 20's wherein “their outlook formed during decades in which attitudes toward women were particularly confusing...they grew up being told the world was post-feminist, that sexism and misogyny were over, and feminists should pack up their placards” (Cochrane, 2013). Further Cochrane states, the wave's concerns are “forever shifting” as women begin to confront various issues of oppression in their own personal lives. Cochrane emphasizes the culture and thinking of fourth-wave feminists is brought about by their collective shock and dismay upon recognizing stark differences between what they were taught growing up about equality and the reality of

how they are treated in society today. The fourth-wave continues the goals of its predecessor, third-wave feminism, by highlighting the importance of intersectionality to feminist theory (Zimmerman, 2017). It focuses on women's poverty, education, employment, sexual rights and health. The fourth-wave differs from the third-wave in that it ushers in a new focus on politics and issues of human trafficking, socialism, anti-capitalism, patriarchy, pornography, rape culture, slut-shaming, and sex positivity.

The newest wave, finds itself in the crosshairs of both the third-wave individualism and second-wave focus on collective action. As Rivers (2017) writes, “much like the third wave before it, fourth wave feminism is fractured and complex, frequently reinforcing the advancement of the individual and centering the seductive notions of ‘choice,’ ‘empowerment,’ and ‘agency.’” (p. 24). However, some state the fourth-wave is reverting to second-wave approaches of collective identity, noting Laura Bates, author of *Everyday Sexism*—originally a project created through an online website in which women could record personal stories and accounts of sexism and now turned into a book accounting the sexism women face in their daily lives—is slated as the “leading figure” of fourth-wave feminism (Aitkenhead, 2014; Pruchniewska, 2016). Bates, like many others in the movement, are nascent feminists just beginning to embark upon their journey of feminist identity development. Bates encourages women of all ages to “share your story” to dispel the belief that sexism is a remnant of history (Pruchniewska, 2016). The collective call to action has accumulated one hundred thousand entries and echo's second-wave essentialist teachings of commonality among all women. As Bates noted women into their 70's are sharing experiences with girls as young as 12 (Bates, 2016).

Additionally, as feminism is again finding its place in the public forum, celebrities such

as, Beyoncé, Taylor Swift, and Miley Cyrus are beginning to outwardly identify as feminists. Rivers (2017) writes of the problematic nature of this “individualized, neoliberal, and capitalist vision of ‘success’” (p. 25) highlighting the conundrum of fourth-wave feminism in that the revival of feminism by pop culture icons reduces women’s success to one of “personal achievements, and in turn, personal responsibility.” (p. 25).

Growth of Egalitarianism and Feminism

This historical context of egalitarianism is worth noting, particularly as the 21st century ushers in a shift of female gender norms and a rise of feminist rhetoric that beckons women to seek out new social roles (ones which provide access to previously held male privileges) (Copen et al., 2012; Greenwood, et al., 2015; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). Research shows there is a widespread perception that gender norms are shifting towards egalitarianism and away from traditionalism, as well as the belief that they will continue in this trajectory (Diekman & Eagly, 2000; Tinklin et al., 2005).

An experimental study by Diekman and Eagly (2000) found participants (both men and women) believe women present as more masculine in modern day culture compared to the 1950s (masculinity vs. femininity was defined in terms of agentic vs. communal personality characteristics and cognitive styles emphasizing rationality and mathematical reasoning vs. intuition and creativity). Additionally, participants believed this trend would continue into the future. Participants read a narrative and were asked to rate the individual within the narrative on gender stereotypic characteristics in physical, cognitive, and personality domains. The individual’s gender (male vs. female) and year (1950, present, 2050) were manipulated. In addition, participants were asked to estimate the percentage of workers by gender in six traditional male and female occupations (e.g., traditional male occupation: lawyer, traditional

female occupation: elementary school teacher). Participants were also asked to estimate the percentages of household activities performed by men vs. women (e.g., traditional male activity: mowing the lawn, traditional female activity: laundry).

Research indicated participants perceived gender roles to shift egalitarian and nontraditional with the passage of time, in both occupational and household domains (Diekman & Eagly, 2000). Women were perceived to take on more masculine cognitive and personality characteristics over time, while men remained relatively unchanged in their cognitive and personality styles. Researchers concluded this dramatic shift in female gender roles is likely due to the influx of women into traditional male-dominated occupations. Further, the minimal shift in male gender roles is related to the restricted mobility of men into female-dominated occupations. In that, women experience more vocational flexibility, such that gender egalitarianism supports the schema of a more “masculine woman,” however, this does not occur in reverse.

Women are more often supported in endeavoring traditional masculine pursuits, whereas men are not granted the same support in their endeavors of feminine pursuits. This finding is corroborated by the results of a study by Bosak et al., (2018), wherein men who demonstrated more communal personality traits and advocacy for others (i.e., advocated on behalf of their team vs. advocacy for self in the workplace) were perceived as less competent and lacking agency compared to female counterparts. This suggests the social value of feminine versus masculine still prioritizes the latter. The study by Diekman & Eagly (2000) provides evidence that among an adult population there is a perceived shift in female gender norms from the 1950s as well as a belief in the continual shift towards greater egalitarianism in the future, at least for those engaging in masculine stereotyped behavior.

Similar findings concerning egalitarianism and shifting gender norms have also been noted among populations of Scottish youth, a population with similar western cultural norms to America. Tinklin et al. (2005) investigated attitudes on gender roles and personal aspirations for the future of 14-16 year olds. It was widely noted that boys and girls believed it was equally important for both boys and girls to receive good grades and an education. Further, only 22% of boys and 2% of girls in the sample agreed that men should be the primary breadwinners in a family. The majority (92% boys, 95% girls) believed it was important for all to have “successful and worthwhile careers.” The belief that childcare should be a joint responsibility was also widely supported and 72% of boys and 79% of girls reported they would respect a man who stayed at home to take care of his children and supported his wife working outside of the home—a gender dynamic that was undoubtedly absent from more traditional families of the 1950s. They also found career and family aspirations for boys and girls did not significantly differ, in that both aspired for a successful career, a university degree, marriage or a long-term partner, and children.

The authors compared their findings to a study of 16 year olds conducted by the British Cohort Study in 1986 and found significant differences in gender (Tinklin et al., 2005). Specifically, self-efficacy and awareness of strengths for the future were overall more positive for the 2000 cohort in comparison to the 1986 cohort. Boys and girls were also more aligned in their views about their strengths for the future. Boys in 1986 considered themselves to be “good with their hands and to be clear thinkers, while girls were more likely to consider themselves to be good communicators, clean and tidy, reliable and able to take responsibility” (p. 139). In comparison to the 2000 cohort, there were no significant differences between boys and girls in these domains (Tinklin et al., 2005).

Danger of Egalitarian Beliefs

However, in contrast to the growing outward support and discussion of women in the workforce and mounting aspirations for gender equality in the future, as previously noted, the current stereotypical image of a successful leader remains characterized by agentic qualities associated with men (Acker, 1990; Ferguson, 1984; Kanter, 1977; Martin, 2001; Peterson, 2007; Schein, 2007; Tienari, Quack, & Theobald, 2002). It appears that while individuals seemingly believe the future will bring about more gender equality, societal belief systems and schemas about women have not yet shifted towards egalitarianism in the workplace. One potential reason gender schemas are stymied in their progress towards egalitarianism is the invisibility of gender in well-intentioned organizations that espouse gender equality rhetoric (Benschop and Doorewaard, 1998; Gill, 2002; Hoerber, 2007; Thomas & Ely, 1996).

It appears egalitarianism has become equated with a disavowal of differences between individuals. While there may be benevolent intentions behind an employer's desire to minimize gender differences, doing so does not resolve the problem of sexism in the workplace, and inadvertently obscures actual gender discrimination that continues to exist. Thomas and Ely (1996) have aptly addressed this issue by highlighting the limitations of a pro diversity message in the workplace; stating, "Its color-blind, gender-blind ideal is to some degree built on the implicit assumptions that "we are all the same," or "we aspire to being all the same." Further, one could seemingly substitute Thomas and Ely's *same* with *White, cisgender, able-bodied, male*. Thus, women are left questioning the veracity of their experiences of sexism and turn inward for explanation. The trend of outwardly promoting gender equality may be related to the political correctness movement in American culture, in which individuals' belief systems are motivated by external forces (Hughes, 2011; Gushue & Hinman, 2017).

Political correctness was first introduced as a “puritanical intervention to sanitize the language” to remove oppressive pretenses in one’s language as a method of “undoing some past injustices” and “improving social relations” (Hughes, 2011, p. 1). An inadvertent outcome of political correctness is movement away from blatant forms of oppression and prejudice towards more subtle forms (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005). This phenomenon has been widely researched in the domain of racism (Dovidio et al., 2002; Pearson, Dovidio, & Gaertner, 2009; Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008). For example, individuals’ racial biases are becoming subtler through aversive racism—“a subtle, often unintentional form of bias that characterizes many White Americans who possess strong egalitarian values and believe that they are non-prejudiced” (Dovidio et al., 2002, p. 90), and microaggressions—degrading statements or behaviors that reflect unconscious beliefs of one’s superior identity group through unintentional rebuffs towards those of a different reference group (Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008; Sue et al., 2008; Sue et al., 2009). Additionally, research notes harmful “rebound effects” of unconscious, underground forms of racism, which occur when individuals are motivated to suppress their prejudices by external forces (Wyer, 2007), such as politically correct culture. The effects of political correctness also permeate the expression of overt sexist attitudes, which are masked by modern day sexism, one type of which is known as benevolent sexism—a set of attitudes towards women, that relegate women to strict roles based upon stereotypes of warmth, caregivers, and intimacy seeking (Glick & Fiske, 1996).

Modern Day Sexism

Given the importance of egalitarianism in America’s politically correct attuned culture (Benbow & Stanley, 1996), public disapproval would result from direct, hostile forms of sexism. However, as noted above, egalitarianism may be an outward projection of one’s idealized or

ought-self beliefs, which does not necessarily match one's internal actual-self belief system and acts to minimize persistent oppression. Higgins (1989) postulated a theory of self-discrepancy based upon the longstanding notion that when individuals hold conflicting beliefs (e.g., belief one is non-sexist and feeling uncomfortable with a female president) they experience discomfort.

Higgins further outlines three selves, the (1) *ought-self*—one's representation of attributes they believe others expect they should or ought to have, these include duties, obligations, and responsibilities—the (2) *ideal self*—one's representation of attributes oneself or another wishes or would ideally like an individual to have, these include hopes, desires, and wishes—and lastly the (3) *actual self*—one's representation of attributes that either oneself or another believe the individual currently possess. Based upon Higgins theory, it can be understood that the pervasive and socialized sexism men and women have internalized, conflicts with their desire and responsibility (*ideal and ought selves*) to be and appear to others as egalitarian, therefore individuals have learned to conceal and suppress their sexist attitudes (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005). Perhaps, as a result of the tendency to reduce psychological distress, at both individual and systemic levels, researchers have noted the dichotomous depiction of women in modern culture as either the Madonna or the whore, highlighting how sexism continues to take on extremes in its stereotyping of women as individuals oscillate between assuaging their ideal, ought, and actual selves (Glick & Fiske, 2001). An example of sexism in a dichotomous context is outlined in the Ambivalent Sexism Theory.

The Ambivalent Sexism Theory (Glick & Fiske, 1996) postulates individuals hold both hostile and benevolent attitudes towards women; however, the latter is rarely conceived as discriminatory and therefore, its negative effects often go unexplored. Hostile sexism (HS) is an “adversarial view of gender relations in which women are perceived as seeking to control men,

whether through sexuality or feminist ideology” (Glick & Fiske, 2001, p. 109). Conversely, benevolent sexism (BS) views women as “pure creatures who ought to be protected, supported, and adored and whose love is necessary to make a man complete” (p. 109). The dangerous nature of BS lies in its frequent positive interpretation as “cherishing,” which obscures its restrictive quality of relegating women to traditional gender roles and maintaining men’s power over women.

It is theorized that both hostile and benevolent sexism exist as a method of reinforcing men’s superiority and dominance within patriarchy, while also justifying women’s subordination in comparison to men (Glick & Fiske, 2001; Glick et al., 2000). The researchers postulate BS, specifically, exists to “obtain [women’s] acquiescence, as it works effectively and invisibly to promote gender inequality” (Glick et al., 2000, p. 763). Further, the authors suggest hostile and benevolent sexism both have biological and social origins, given that they are present across a wide array of cultures—underscoring the ambivalent relationship between men and women (Glick et al., 2000). Glick and Fiske (1996) view the frequent bias towards patriarchal standards in cultures through an evolutionary psychology lens, attributing the development of this bias to biological and social factors. The following are theorized to contribute to gender roles and male dominance in many cultures: sexual dimorphism (differences in size and strength between men and women) provides men with increased means for physical aggression and hostility towards others; sexual selection means larger men (perceived as more capable providers) are more frequently selected for reproduction by women; and the inherent biological ability of women assigns them the labor of carrying and nourishing a child during and after pregnancy, thereby reinforcing women as domiciled and relational. Given the present study’s hypotheses will focus on BS, a review of extant research related to BS is explored below.

Benevolent Sexism

Benevolent Sexism (BS) as defined by Glick and Fiske, 2001 is comprised of three categories: *Complementary Gender Differentiation*, *Heterosexual Intimacy*, and *Protective Paternalism*. The first component contains the belief that “women are the better gender—but only in ways that suit conventional gender roles” (Sarlet et al., 2012, p. 445). The concept of *Heterosexual Intimacy* underlies the belief that men and women have strong affection towards each other and men “achieve true happiness in life only when involved in a romantic relationship with a woman” (p.445). Therefore, disavowing non-heteronormative belief systems. Lastly, *Protective Paternalism* outlines the belief that “men should protect, cherish, and provide for women on whom they depend.” (p.445). The origins of Protective Paternalism come from the ideology that men have greater authority, physical strength and therefore must act as protectors of women.

One way of understanding benevolent sexism is to view the concept through the lens of microaggressions (Nadal et al., 2013). Gender microaggressions as outlined by Nadal et al., (2013) are “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative sexist slights and insults towards women” (p. 193). The literature highlights how gender microaggressions are similar to many other forms of sexism, including hostile and benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 2001). Microaggressions are further delineated into three categories: 1) microassaults, 2) microinvalidations, and 3) microinsults. Gender microassaults are likened to overt, hostile sexism, such as catcalls towards a woman, which are more easily identified as blatant sexism. Gender invalidations are similar to hostile sexism in their invalidation of women’s realities, stating women are “too sensitive” and denying the existence of sexism, perhaps instead labeling women as “exaggerating” or “too

easily offended” both of which are items on the Ambivalent Sexism Hostile subscale (Glick & Fiske, 2001). Gender microinsults “are behaviors and statements in which perpetrators send negative messages toward women” (Nadal et al., p. 195), which align with the chivalrous aspects of BS. For instance, a man may offer to carry a box for a woman, demonstrating his chivalry, however his actions also communicate his belief that “women are incapable of physical labor and his unconscious bias that women are inferior” (Nadal et al., p. 195).

Research has found women who are exposed to BS are more likely to endorse meritocracy and “system justifying” beliefs, which sustain men in authoritative positions (Jost & Kay, 2005), and prompt more self-doubt in women (Dardenne, Dumont, & Bollier, 2007). Crosby (1984) suggests this is related to some women’s cognitive distortions of discrimination, such that by distorting reality they are able to conform to the belief of a just and equitable world. This worldview is rampant in American culture as a method of legitimizing status differentials, as well as to quell anxieties regarding one’s perception of personal control and orderly social structure (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996). The theory of system justifying beliefs will be further explored below.

A study by Barreto, Ellemers, Piebinga, and Moya, (2010) found women who were exposed to BS were more likely to describe themselves based upon relational attributes (e.g., attentive, warm, and romantic) as compared to task-related attributes (e.g., self-assured, ambitious, and dominant). The researchers also investigated this relationship as it pertains to a work environment, by creating a situation in which participants believed they may be collaborating with other participants on a task (Barreto, et al., 2010). To manipulate BS compared to the control condition (no sexism), participants were asked to indicate if they had participated in psychological experiments before, if they had worked with a partner in previous

experiments, and if so, how they evaluated this prior experience and with what sort of people they generally preferred to work with. Participants were told their partners were also completing these questions and their responses would be provided to them.

In the BS condition, participants were told their partner was male, had previously worked mostly with female partners, “whom I had to help with several difficult and heavy tasks, but a gentleman does that of course [protective paternalism],” and prefers “to work with women because they are more sensitive and have better taste [complementary gender differentiation]. Men and women complement each other in many situations [heterosexual intimacy]” (Barreto et al., 2010, p. 539). In the control condition, it was noted their partner was also male and had worked mostly with females previously because there were more female students, and did not mind who they worked with “as long as the task is completed successfully” (p. 539).

The findings revealed, when female participants expected they would be collaborating with a partner in the BS condition, they were less likely to describe themselves based upon task-related attributes compared to those in the control condition. Additionally, the researchers investigated leadership qualities and found when participants expected to be working with a partner demonstrating BS they were more likely to describe their partner as a “better leader” than participants in the control condition. Thus, the findings indicate experiences of BS are related to women relegating themselves to subordinate positions, thereby policing their own behavior and leadership potential. Given the detrimental implications of BS, in addition to its outwardly positive connotation, a better understanding the factors involved in one’s perception of discrimination is imperative. The following chapter will explore such factors.

Perception of Discrimination

One way of understanding how individuals cope with discrimination and oppression, such as women coping with sexism, is to understand the factors involved in one's perception of discrimination. Research notes individuals are more likely to attribute a negative outcome of an event to discrimination when an individual's social identity is implicated and experiences are seen as undeserved or unfair (Major & Sawyer, 2009). For instance, imagine a woman is up for promotion; she has consistently received accolades for her job performance and has many years' experience in the field. However, the position is given to a man, who has worked at the company for fewer years and has less job experience. If the position was given to another woman, the event is less likely to be perceived as discriminatory, given social identity is not implicated. Additionally, if the woman had received less than exemplary performance reviews, and her male counterpart had excelled, this suggests just reasoning in the managing staff's decision making, and is less likely to be perceived as due to discrimination. Therefore, if an individual feels treatment is just and legitimate, they are less likely to perceive the treatment as discriminatory (Major, Quinton, & McCoy, 2002).

Intentionality also plays a large role in the determination of discrimination. For instance, if an individual perceives the actions as intentionally negative, they are more likely to perceive it as discrimination (Major & Sawyer, 2009). Ambiguous situations such as microaggressions and benevolent sexism are less frequently identified as discriminatory (Blume et al., 2012; Wilkins, Wellman & Kaiser, 2013). Further research indicates individuals rely heavily on contextual cues in their perception of events (Major & Sawyer, 2009). For example, individuals are less likely to believe discrimination occurs within a company that espouses multiculturalism, equality, and claims to have a diversity initiative in their mission statement (Kaiser et al., 2013). This belief

persists in the face of explicit sexism within the workplace even within companies that promote diversity messages. This indicates causal attributions for understanding why or how an event occurs (i.e. a sexism comment) are dependent upon environmental factors, such as messages regarding a company's intentions to be multicultural and value diversity. Based upon Higgins (1989) theory of self-discrepancy, it is possible an individual may attribute the reason for a derogatory comment in the workplace to something other than sexism, if they have internalized messages about the company's value of diversity, which conflict with the cognition that the comment was due to one's sexist ideology. Based upon the theories tenet that individuals need to resolve discomfort, which results from cognitive dissonance, an individual may use relevant environmental information to disavow any attributions of causality to sexism.

Further women and African-Americans (of all genders) are less likely to acknowledge or state that they were victims of discrimination when in the presence of a member from a higher status out-group (Stangor et al., 2002). This is likely due to experiences of privileged individuals invalidating oppressed individuals' statements, as well as the tendency to use contextual information to discern the cause of ambiguous situations as note above. For example, a study by Blau et al. (2005) found individuals who perceive an organization to be just and fair in terms of their allocation of rewards, fairness when making decisions, and general respect and treatment of dignity to employees, were less likely to perceive events of gender discrimination. Given this, it is important to understand the antecedents of perceptions of sexism in the workplace for women. Another potential contributing factor is the significance third and fourth wave feminism places on individualism. It is suggested, by the author, that highly valuing and focusing on individuality may lessen an individual's ability to focus on the collective experiences of those

within shared identity groups, (i.e., women in general and their experiences of discrimination in the workplace).

This notion is supported by a qualitative study by Kelan (2009), in which she conducted focus groups with women employed in Internet technology sectors—a field stereotypically dominated by men. While reviewing and coding the transcripts from focus groups, she found many women coped with gender discrimination in a workplace and a society that espouses gender equality (the study was conducted in Switzerland) by individualizing, (i.e., identifying the cause as something within them), such that their experiences of sexism were internalized rather than attributed to external structural problems. She notes that women individualize these events as a method of aligning with both company cultural norms and societal norms, which indicate gender discrimination is a threat of the past, not today. Kelan highlights the inherent problem with this phenomenon stating:

People realized that gender is a factor around which discrimination can happen, but at the same time, their workplaces were constructed as gender neutral, therefore making gender discrimination a concept no longer needed. There is clear tension between the agency that purportedly follows from individualization and the sense of powerlessness that women can experience when they encounter persistent sexist attitudes within a context where gender is effectively invisible. (p. 206).

Kelan names this phenomenon “gender fatigue,” noting women become fatigued by the constant disconnect between their internal reality (experiences of sexism) and the reality that is presented in society (constructing the workplace as gender neutral), as it relates to gender equality. In support of Kelan’s notion of “gender fatigue” the following chapter will explore the current societal schema of gender discrimination in American culture, which has shifted towards egalitarianism and its implications for women’s perceptions of sexism in the workplace.

Shifting Schemas of Gender Discrimination

The movement away from focusing on women's equality in the workplace (which was emphasized in the second wave), and discrimination against women as a whole (which was emphasized in first and second waves), that characterizes the third and fourth wave feminist movements, has important implications for present schemas of discrimination among young women that ascribe to a third or fourth wave feminist point of view. Given that schemas of discrimination include situations, which are deemed intentional, unjust or undeserved (Major, Quinton, & McCoy, 2002), and in which one's social identity is implicated (Major & Sawyer, 2009), the lessening focusing on essentialism and a unifying identification of women may contribute to a less comprehensive schema of discrimination, such that discrimination may be attributed to other factors besides gender. Taken together, the current atmosphere and contributions to one's schema of discrimination may create circumstances for benevolent sexism and microaggressions against women to thrive and go undetected and unchallenged.

Evidence of shifting attitudes away from essentialism and towards individualism include, current proponents of third and fourth wave feminism such as Sheryl Sandberg, a prominent feminist figure, championing third-wave feminist ideals. She has influenced widespread audiences with her best-selling "feminist manifesto" *Lean In* (Rottenberg, 2014). The book underscores the progress and liberties women currently enjoy due to efforts of first and second-wave feminists, while encouraging women *not* to confront societal obstacles or oppression but rather individual obstacles—constantly monitoring one's own self-impediments and self-created hurdles to equality (Rottenberg, 2014). The tone of her writing is in stark contrast to the consciousness-raising meetings of second-wave feminists, who highlighted one's power in the knowledge and understanding of the universality of women's experiences in a patriarchal

system. Sandberg instead highlights third and fourth wave feminism's alignment with multiplicity and nonconforming attitudes, espousing a focus on one's individual experience. Given that historically, feminist movements have focused on women seeking autonomy and equality particularly in the workplace, the individual centered current wave approach may illuminate how younger generations of women in the workforce differentially perceive discrimination in comparison to older cohorts of women who espouse more second wave feminist ideals, thus contributing to different schemas of discrimination.

This shift in focus towards individualism is important to consider when investigating women's identities and behaviors within the workplace. The newfound focus on individuality in feminism gives rise to new attitudes towards leadership for women—shifting from collaborative to individual initiative driven (Iannello, 2010). “There doesn't seem to be a collective identity. In fact, third-wave feminists reject the notion of collective identity and refuse to be categorized because they *embrace* disunity” (Gilmore, 2001, p. 218). Leadership styles in third and fourth-wave feminism are individually defined and goals are not seen as collective or on a policy level, but individually focused on personal success. Second-wave feminists developed forms of consensual organizations, which lacked individual leadership. Instead leadership was divided equally among members in an egalitarian manner. In contrast with this, third and fourth-wave feminists “seek the individual opportunity to explore, experiment, and focus on their own personal and career development” (p.73). The concept and focus on individualism in the workplace is important in its relationship with one's beliefs about locus of causality, either internal or external. Given that the cognitive framework of the third and fourth-wave feminist movement locates one's success internally and individually, it suggests women who identify with this movement may also locate their failures internally, based upon their individual

attributes instead of systemic forces of sexism. To further understand the implications of an internal locus of causality belief system, the following chapter will explore the Attributional Theory of Achievement Motivation.

Attribution Theory and Locus of Causality

The Attributional Theory of Achievement Motivation, postulated by Weiner (1985), states individuals innately have a tendency to seek out explanations for events, as a method of bettering understanding their environment and themselves in relation to the environment. Weiner notes with any event there are a multitude of potential explanations as to why the event occurred. To better understand how individuals, make causal attributions to events, given the manifold explanations, researchers have explored various dimensions of attribution (Meyer, 1980; Meyer, Koelbl, 1982; Weiner, 1985; Wimer & Kelley, 1982). Research suggests three distinct dimensions of perceived causality—locus of causality, locus of control, and locus of stability (Weiner, 1985). The dimension of locus of causality is a measure of whether the individual attributes an event to have been caused by themselves (internal) or by something outside of themselves (external) (Russell, 1982). For example, a woman may perceive her recent promotion due to her hard work and ability to complete her job effectively (internal causality), while another woman may perceive the promotion as due to her boss's physical attraction to her (external causality).

Locus of control measures an individual's perceived personal and internal ability to affect an event versus an outside factor's ability to change an event. For instance, the same woman who believes she received her promotion due to her own diligence may also perceive herself as efficacious and feel she has control over her ability to receive a promotion due to her skillfulness in her job performance (internal control). Similarly, the second woman, who perceived her

promotion as due to her boss's physical attraction to her, may feel she has a low level of control over receiving a promotion because she is unable to control her boss's physical attraction (external control).

The last dimension is locus of stability, a measure of the constancy or perceived variability of the event over time. For example, the woman who perceives her promotion as due to her own ability and diligence may perceive her recent garnering of accolades as due to a training on a specified topic that may not transfer onto a new area of expertise (low stability). Whereas, the woman who perceives her promotion as due to her boss's attraction for her may feel this praise and support will continue due to his consistent level of attraction to her (high stability).

While all dimensions allow a multifaceted view of one's perceptions of a situation, the dimension of locus of causality has been deemed the most instrumental (Heider, 1958; Jones & Davis, 1965; Kelley, 1967). Locus of causality has specifically been explored in relation to perceptions of gender discrimination (Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002). For example, Schmitt and Branscombe (2002) asked undergraduate women to imagine themselves in a fictitious situation in which they needed to ask a male professor for special permission to register for a course required by their major. Participants were told to imagine that the professor denies their wish to register for the course and were then randomly assigned to 1) a non-prejudiced condition—in which everyone was excluded from entering the course or 2) a prejudiced condition—in which participants were told that the professor did not grant access to any women but granted access to 10 men.

The findings revealed, when undergraduate women attributed the negative outcome of not gaining access to the course to gender discrimination, by endorsing an item stating “the

professor's actions were due to gender discrimination," they were still more likely to attribute an internal locus of causality, i.e. identifying something within themselves as the cause of the negative outcome, by endorsing items stating, "the professor refused to give me [access to the course] because of something about me/who I am." Therefore, while some women were able to attribute the outcome to gender discrimination they were less likely to attribute the cause to something external, and did not endorse a statement indicating the cause was related to something about the professor, (i.e., identifying the professor's sexism).

While the argument stands that the professor did in fact refuse access to the course due to something about the female student (her gender), the present study argues that in any sexist event the cause is related to the woman's gender, given that is by nature the definition of sexism. However, this study seeks to implore readers to understand the important difference lies in *how* women perceive and place responsibility for the cause of events. While the difference between identifying the locus of causality internally or externally in the above study may appear slight, it is important to consider the women above believed something about themselves was responsible for the event as opposed to holding external and systemic oppression responsible.

System Justifying Beliefs

One potential explanation for this seemingly perplexing dynamic is to explore belief systems about justness and fairness in the world. As previously noted, from childhood, infants begin to regulate their behavior based upon socially sanctioned standards (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). Attributions about events develop similarly to align with socially sanctioned beliefs about how status differentials between individuals are created and why they continue to exist (Cozzarelli, Wilkinson, & Tagler, 2001; Deschamps, & Beauvois, 1994; Feagin, 1972; Forgas, Morris, & Furnham, 1982). A primary belief system in the United States is the Just World Belief

(JWB) (Lerner, 1980), which holds good and bad outcomes are not randomly distributed but instead related to one's deservedness. Further, in a JWB outcomes are inherently fair, not related to luck and the locus of causality of action is within the individual (Major & Sawyer, 2009).

A study by Iatridis and Fousiani (2009) investigated the relationship between socioeconomic status (high vs. low status) and causal attributions (causality, control, stability) as measured by the Causal Dimension Scale (Russell, 1982) and just world beliefs (JWBs). Participants read a narrative in which a man was sitting for an entrance exam for his postgraduate studies. His socioeconomic status was manipulated to be from the upper or lower class and his successful passing of the exam was also manipulated to create a success or failure condition.

The results indicated participants who read a narrative about an upper-class student who successfully passed his exam, as well as participants who read a narrative about a lower-class student who failed his exam, were more likely to attribute the cause to internal sources compared to other conditions. For example, participants believed the event was related to one's ability and effort in both conditions. Additionally, participants in both conditions were significantly more likely to hold JWBs compared to participants in other conditions. This suggests the participants believed outcomes to events either successes or failures are generally deserved. And further, those who deserve success are from higher statuses, while those who deserve failure are from lower statuses. As causal attributions are developed in relation to socially sanctioned belief systems, the notion of a "just world" continues to perpetuate status differentials.

The findings highlight the significance of belief systems in understanding the antecedents of casual attributions to success or failure, specifically for those in lower social statuses, such as women. A specific type of belief system related to just-world beliefs are meritocracy beliefs, which highlight the American ideal that hard work is the path to future success, regardless of

one's group membership or social status (Major et al., 2002). Additional studies have found this type of belief system is related to women's denial of sexism, which may be attributed to some women's beliefs that they do not deserve certain successes due to their subordinate status in society, such that failures are perceived to be caused internally.

Meritocracy Beliefs

Research notes, women who believe in individual mobility—“the belief that status hierarchy is permeable and that individuals have the capacity to improve their own individual states” (Major et al., 2002, p. 269)—are less likely to state they were discriminated against when rejected by a man, compared to women who do not endorse individual mobility beliefs (Major, et al., 2002). Further, priming of meritocratic beliefs has been noted to have similar effects on women's perceptions of sexist discrimination (McCoy & Major, 2007; Stephens & Levine, 2011).

One research study found when women were primed with meritocracy beliefs, they were less likely to attribute rejection by a man to discrimination and more likely to attribute it to themselves (McCoy & Major, 2007). Another study by McCoy and Major (2007) found that after being primed with the belief that individual preferences (in comparison to outside force), are the primary determinant of one's outcomes, individuals were more likely to believe in the existence of gender equality, equal opportunities for men and women, and that gender discrimination is nonexistent in comparison to individuals who were not primed with beliefs that focused on the self and individual locus of control over outcomes. Additionally, a study by Blau et al. (2005) found internal locus of control was negatively related to perception of gender discrimination—such that individuals, whom attributed greater internal locus of control, were less likely to perceive events as discriminatory based upon gender. This pattern was consistent

when the same sample was tested again two years later, suggesting a stable relation between locus of control and perception of gender discrimination.

Individual mobility and meritocracy beliefs are important factors to consider when exploring the underlying factors of one's perception of discrimination, because they are related to one's schema for discrimination (i.e., one's expectations of what discrimination looks like) (Major & Sawyer, 2009). Individuals create schemas about discrimination, therefore when judging an event as discriminatory or not, they will compare the event to his or her schema of discrimination, to identify whether the current event aligns with his or her schema. As noted above, discriminatory schemas generally consist of a situation that involves one's social identity, is deemed intentional, and is seen as unjust or undeserved.

Additionally, individual mobility and meritocracy beliefs influence one's perceptions of justice or deservedness and are therefore important to consider in understanding of the factors affecting perception of discrimination. When historically reviewing women's perceptions of injustices and discrimination in the United States, the three waves of feminism denote distinctive schemas of discrimination at each time period. The first and second waves of feminism are characterized by distinctive beliefs about women's lack of individual mobility and meritocracy alongside men as it pertained to their political and economic agency. The third-wave of feminism however, lacks a unifying schema of discrimination; instead it employs an all-encompassing and personally defined definition of discrimination. The amorphous nature of third-wave feminism will be further explored below, specifically as it pertains to individual mobility and meritocracy beliefs.

Meritocracy Beliefs in Relation to Third and Fourth Wave Feminism

It is important to be mindful of the focus on individuality within third and fourth-wave feminism given the tendency for women who espouse meritocracy beliefs to disavow experiences of sexism (McCoy & Major, 2007; Stephens & Levine, 2011). Given that third and fourth-wave feminist ideals and meritocracy beliefs focus on self-monitoring and internal locus of causality, these behaviors may perversely act to legitimize present male hierarchy within the workplace in the most insidious manner. By obfuscating the role of sexism in the obstacles women face in the workplace, women may turn inward and monitor their own behavior to find faults as a way to understand and attribute causality to an outcome. Further, there is evidence that under the guise of promoting gender equality in the work place, which is also a prominent goal of political correctness (Hughes, 2011) women are actually not benefitting as much as men (Iannello, 2010). As a result, what at first appears to be a widespread shift towards egalitarianism may, in fact, mask the oppressive forces against women's career development. Additionally, the growing trend that disavows sexism as a current societal issue, which is amplified by third and fourth wave feminism's rejection of a unifying code of womanhood, also works to hide persistent sexism (Valentine, Jackson, & Mayblin, 2014).

Code of Empowerment or Oppression? Presently, women are indoctrinated to follow a "code of empowerment" (Rennison, 2014, p. 13) in which they are taught they should strive to overcome the current traditional gender norms, by engaging in self-promotion and placing responsibility at the individual level (Rivers, 2017). "The individual woman is both the problem and the solution. Women are stuck in inhibiting self-perceptions and behaviour patterns which obstruct their career development" (Rennison, 2014, p.13). For instance, women are criticized for taking ownership over "non-strategic, dead-end projects," in which they focus on

highlighting the common contributions and efforts by all, instead of their own individual performance, and women are rebuked for lacking self-esteem and assertiveness in the workplace. The message of the code of empowerment as championed by *Lean In* (Sandberg, 2013), states these barriers are self-inflicted (Rottenberg, 2014). “The individual woman must overcome the resistance she creates for herself” (Rennison, 2014, p. 13). The current ideals of third and fourth-wave feminism, which advocate for inclusivity and intersectionality, may be more paradoxical upon closer examination given the focus on individual success and self-promotion in the workplace, inherently negates the existence and awareness of structural inequalities (Rennison, 2014). “By making individualism the dominant ideology, it becomes easy for governments and corporations to neglect the problem and place the primary responsibility on the shoulders of the individual women” (p. 15).

The myth of meritocracy largely ignores differences between individuals, and instead creates an illusion that individuals are on an equal playing field. Sandberg’s notion of feminism has been criticized, not only for her victim-blaming ideals, but for also including only a small subset of women, (e.g., white, middle class, heterosexual, cisgender women) and advertising her proposals as inclusive (Bruenig, 2015; van Pelt, 2016). Van Pelt (2016) analyses Sandberg’s message through the lens of Audre Lorde’s work, *The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House*, in which Lorde emphasizes the importance of dismantling the oppressive systems and criticizes the feminist movement for ignoring differences between women, noting how this continues to contribute to social hierarchy. The message of *Lean In* does not question the status quo nor seek to disrupt patriarchy. Instead, Sandberg seeks to elevate individual women up the corporate ladder, neglecting to consider how to engage in overall social reform (Bruenig, 2015).

Third and fourth-wave feminism's focus on individual choice and empowerment has been critiqued for its inherent narrative that one's career development is not related to systemic gender inequality (Budgeon, 2011). Budgeon suggests feminists aim to "advance a politics based on *self-definition*" (p. 283) is detrimental to the overall feminist movement because this requires "a denial of the effects that external influences have on the realization of individual success and as such the classed and raced constitution of the 'successful' feminine subject is obscured" (p. 284). Instead she states, individual success is seen as due to an individual's ability or motivation to make the right choices (i.e. a code of empowerment). Similarly, Rivers (2017) notes,

The responsibility for change rests firmly with the individual, as this particular brand of feminism stresses its inclusivity and support for the apparent 'everywoman,' the requirement to 'love yourself' and overcome your 'flaws' becomes as pervasive and potentially damaging as the overtly negative or misogynistic ideologies such a discourse was designed to interrupt. This introduces the paradoxical requirement for women to be 'perfect,' even in accepting their imperfections. (p. 63)

This code of empowerment places immense pressure on women to make the "right choice" and when women are confronted with systemic barriers related to sexism, racism, classism etc. they may attribute their struggles to individual failure instead of systemic oppression. No known study to date has investigated the relationship between a woman's perception of sexism in the workplace and the interrelated themes of third and fourth-wave feminism, however the relationship between these concepts may shed light on the related variables and antecedents to perceiving sexism in the workplace—an external locus of causality, versus perceiving events as a woman's wrongdoing—an internal locus of causality. Additionally, some research suggests a feminist identity acts as a protective factor to help women maintain a positive self-image and attribute negative outcomes to external sources as opposed to internally attributed to one's ability or personhood (Crocker & Major, 1989).

Research by Sue, Capodilupo, and Holder (2008) on individuals coping mechanisms to manage racial microaggressions, may shed light on how women cope with gender microaggressions. Sue, Capodilupo, and Holder (2008) suggest some individuals develop a *healthy paranoia*, which, “refers to a state of awareness participants reported they find themselves in either right before or right after the microaggressive incident” (p.198). This concept can be understood as marginalized groups heightened awareness and sensitivity to oppressive experiences, such as sexism. In support of this theory, research has found women were better able to identify sexist beliefs and gender microaggressions compared to men, (Basford, Offermann, & Behrend, 2014; Swim et al., 2005) supporting the notion that one’s connection with their marginalized identity assists them in recognizing and identifying oppressive events. Additional research outlining the benefits of a feminist identity in its relationship with perceiving sexism is outlined below.

Feminist Identity and Perceived Sexism

Feminism is conceptualized as “attitudes toward women’s roles and rights” (Moradi & Subich, 2002). Feminist Identity development (FID) is described as a complex pattern of attitudes and beliefs, which someone develops upon identifying as a feminist (Moradi & Subich, 2002). The Feminist Identity Development composite scale, a nuanced model of female gender identity development, proposed by Fischer et al. (2000), is a five-stage model of development based upon racial identity models in which “each stage be considered a distinct worldview” (p.19), by which women construct and integrate information about themselves and the world. Through the five stages, a woman moves toward a positive personal identification with her gender.

The first stage of Passive Acceptance (PA) can be described as “an acceptance of traditional gender roles” and “belief that men are superior to women” (Fischer et al., 2000 p. 15). A woman in the PA stage does not question traditional gender roles and denies the existence of sexism. A sample item is, “I like being a traditional female.” A woman moves into the Revelation (REV) phase when confronted with gender injustice from mainstream patriarchal culture. In this stage, the woman’s consciousness about her gender becomes heightened, which causes her to feel anger towards men and guilt upon reflecting about the ways she may have contributed to her own oppression. Women in this stage begin to question traditional gender roles and dualistic thinking about gender. A sample item is, “Gradually, I am beginning to see just how sexist society really is.”

A woman moves into the Embeddedness-emanation (EE) stage when she begins to align herself with her female identity and feel a greater sense of connection with women compared to more cautious interactions with men. A sample item from this subscale is, “I am very interested in women’s studies.” The fourth stage is Synthesis (SYN); women in this stage are able to develop a positive, non-stereotyped feminist identity by surpassing traditional gender roles and evaluating men on an individual basis. A sample item is, “I am proud to be a competent woman.” A woman moves into the final phase of Active commitment (AC) when she has developed a “deep commitment to social change and the belief that men are equal to, but not the same as women” (p. 16). In this stage, a woman’s behavior may gravitate towards social activism, aiming to eliminate sexism and oppression of all forms. A sample item is, “I care very deeply about men and women having equal opportunities in all respects.” This socially just attitude trickles down to everyday activities in which everyday behavior is performed according to one’s feminist perspective (Fischer, 2000).

Research indicates those in early stages of feminist identity, are less likely to perceive discrimination over the lifetime, in comparison to later stages of feminist identity (Moradi & Subich, 2002). Moradi and Subich (2002) investigated the relationship of perceived sexist events, both proximal (recent) and distal (over the course of one's lifetime), with psychological distress, as measured by the Brief Symptom Inventory (Derogatis, 1975) and feminist identity development, as measured by the Feminist Identity Development scale (FIDS) based upon Downing and Roush's (1985) five-stage model of feminist identity development. The sample included female college students as well as female faculty, in efforts to obtain a diverse sample in relation to age and overall development. They found for both college students and faculty members, experiences of sexism—both recent and over one's lifetime—and early stages of feminist identity development were positively related to psychological distress. They also found the first stage of feminist identity development—passive acceptance (PA)—which is again characterized by a denial of sexism, beliefs in patriarchy and traditional gender roles, and recent experiences of sexism within the past year, accounted for a unique amount of variance in psychological distress symptoms. This finding indicates the acceptance of traditional gender roles and denial of sexism (i.e., PA) and recent experiences of sexism may be antecedents to the development of psychological symptoms including somatization, obsessive compulsivity, depression, anxiety, hostility, and paranoid ideation.

Additionally, the researchers found early stages of feminist identity development including denial of sexism (PA), a heightened awareness of and guilt and anger about sexism (Revelation) and seeking out community with other women (Embeddedness-emanation) were related to greater psychological distress. However, they noted the first stage (PA) was the only variable to account for significant variation of psychological symptoms, suggesting a women's

denial of discrimination against herself and other women may result in and intensify psychological distress in relation to experiences of perceived sexism within the past year.

A study by Sabik and Tylka (2006) further supports the notion that a feminist identity acts to support perceptions of sexist events and buffer against maladaptive coping strategies, specifically measured in this study as disordered eating habits. Researchers found women who reported perceiving sexist events both in their lifetime and recently and were in later stages of feminist identity development (FID), specifically the Synthesis and Active Commitment stages, which are characterized by an action orientation to engage in the feminist movement, were less likely to report engaging in disordered eating habits. Therefore, later stages of FID moderate the relationship between perceived sexist events and disordered eating habits, a maladaptive coping mechanism to manage one's negative emotions. The researchers suggest that as a woman develops a more nuanced gender identity and becomes more aware of systemic injustices against women, she is likely to become less vulnerable to the harmful effects of sexism and more likely to "contextualize sexist events and not internalize the blame for these events by engaging in maladaptive eating" (Sabik & Tylka, 2006, p. 83). A feminist identity is also related to a multitude of positive coping strategies including seeking support and confronting sexual harassment (Leaper & Arias, 2011), therefore a feminist identity may also allow women to more accurately perceive sexist events given they have ample coping skills to manage the distress of acknowledging such events.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Based upon the previously discussed theoretical and empirical work, the following research questions guided the current investigation: How is feminist identity development (FID) related to one's attributions of sexism—specifically, one's locus of causality, either internal or

external? Attributions of sexism are operationalized as one's ability to identify and acknowledge the existence of power differentials between men and women, through one's perception of locus of causality. Specifically, women who attribute the cause of not receiving a promotion as due to institutional power differences between men and women, are likely to identify the cause of not receiving a promotion as coming from something outside of themselves and due to something systemic in their environment. Therefore, they would be more likely to locate the cause of not receiving promotion as coming from something within their environment (i.e., external locus of causality).

This research study questions if women's feminist identity plays a role in one's perception of causality. Specifically, are women who identify as feminists more likely to attribute the cause of a sexist event to be something in their environment and outside of themselves? Do experiences of modern sexism (i.e. benevolent sexism) affect one's locus of causality, and is this relationship the same or different for experiences of hostile sexism? Specifically, do women experience and interpret the cause of sexist events in the same manner for covert versus overt forms of sexism? How does the relationship between FID and locus of causality change or remain the same when experiencing benevolent sexism? And what about for hostile sexism? For instance, if women who identify as feminists are more likely to attribute the cause of a sexist event to be something in their environment, does this relationship hold for both overt and covert forms of sexist? Finally, what is the relationship between meritocracy beliefs and locus of causality? Specifically, are women who believe that through persistence and hard work they can overcome any obstacle more likely to attribute the cause of a sexist event as something internal, about themselves that they need to overcome? Do meritocracy beliefs predict one's locus of causality for experiences of sexism?

To investigate these research questions, participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions created by the researcher: hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and no sexism control. The narratives mirror each other and read exactly the same, except for specific statements adapted from the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick & Fiske, 1996). The narratives describe a situation that participants were asked to imagine is happening to them. Each of the narratives begins the same: an individual applies for a promotion at her place of work and is granted an interview. From there, however, the narratives diverge. The feedback provided to the applicant after the interview is varied to create the following conditions: benevolent sexism, hostile sexism, or no sexism (control).

H I: Each stage of Feminist Identity development, as measured by the Feminist Identity Composite scale (FIDS), was hypothesized to be significantly related to locus of causality, as measured by the attributions of causality scale on the Causal Dimension scale (CDS). Specifically, the first stage on the FIDS (Passive Acceptance) was hypothesized to have a positive and significant relationship with an internal locus of causality. The remaining stages, Revelation, Embeddedness and Emanation, Synthesis, and Active Commitment, were predicted to have a negative and significant relationship with an internal locus of causality, given it is expected as a woman moves through the stages of feminist identity development she will be more apt to identify sexism as a product of her environment and not something about herself. This was tested using bivariate correlation analyses.

H II: Meritocracy beliefs were hypothesized to be positively related to locus of causality as measured by the CDS, in which high scores indicate an internal locus of control. This hypothesis was tested using a bivariate correlation.

H III: Type of sexism, as manipulated by the condition, was predicted to be related to locus of causality as measured by the CDS. It was expected that women in the hostile sexism condition would be more likely than women in the benevolent sexism and control conditions to attribute the cause of not receiving a promotion to external events, e.g. sexism. This was measured based upon mean differences of internal locus of causality among the three conditions (hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, no sexism control) based upon results from a T-test. Given the T-test was significant post-hoc analyses were conducted to compare sets of means to determine where the difference lies.

H IV: Internal locus of causality was hypothesized to be a function of three variables: feminist identity development, type of sexism (hostile, benevolent, and no sexism control), and meritocracy beliefs. Such that a woman is more likely to attribute an internal locus of control to a sexist situation if she is in the Passive Acceptance stage of feminist identity development, is subjected to benevolent sexism versus hostile sexism, and hold meritocracy beliefs regarding individual mobility. To test this hypothesis structural equation modeling was performed. Three separate structural equations models, one for each type of sexism (hostile, benevolent, and no sexism control) were computed. Exogenous indicator variables were identified from preliminary correlation analyses between feminist identity development and causal attributions. Specifically, stages of feminist identity development as measured by FIDS that were correlated with attributions of causality, based upon the CDS were used as indicator variables. Attribution of causality variables were identified based upon factor analyses and were entered as endogenous latent variables in the path model.

The following chapter will describe the participants, sampling procedure, instruments and data analysis.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Pilot Study

A pilot study, a trial run completed in preparation for the full research study, was conducted to examine the reliability and validity of the experimental narratives created by the researcher. In addition, a panel of three expert reviewers reviewed and collaborated with the researcher in creating the narratives. Pilot studies are helpful in detecting potential flaws in measurement procedures as well as in operationalizing independent variables (Welman & Kruger, 1999). The goal of the pilot study was to examine if the experimental narratives were manipulating the variable of sexism to create separate and unique conditions. This was assessed by conducting an independent samples t-test to compare the narratives on a rating of sexism in hostile, benevolent, and control conditions, (i.e. To what extent do you believe Mr. Williams is sexist?).

SPSS 24.0 was used to create descriptive statistics for the 57 pilot study participants. The respondents were aged 26-67 ($M = 36.51$ $SD = 11.81$). The majority of the sample was White (94.7%) middle class (58.9%) and had received higher education degrees (80.7% had received a bachelor's degree or higher). The sample comprised of mostly single (never married) (45.3%) and married (49.1%) women. A large proportion of participants were professional level in their careers (40.3%) and worked in health (28.6%) or publishing (21.4%) fields (See table 1 for demographic information).

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics for Pilot Study

| | | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------|------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Age | 25-40 | 41 | 71.9 |
| | >40 | 16 | 28.1 |
| Race | AA/Black | 4 | 7.0 |
| | Asian | 3 | 5.3 |
| | Hispanic/Latina | 3 | 5.3 |
| | White | 44 | 51.2 |
| | Other | 3 | 3.5 |
| Education | High School | 4 | 7.0 |
| | Some College | 1 | 1.8 |
| Associate's Degree | | 5 | 8.8 |
| | Bachelor's Degree | 26 | 45.6 |
| | Graduate/Professional Degree | 20 | 35.1 |
| | Other | 1 | 1.8 |
| Social Class | Lower | 1 | 1.8 |
| | Lower Middle | 6 | 10.7 |
| | Middle | 33 | 58.9 |
| | Upper Middle | 16 | 28.6 |
| Level in Profession | Entry | 8 | 15.1 |
| | Professional | 24 | 45.3 |
| | First-Level Mgmt. | 11 | 20.8 |
| | Mid-Level Mgmt. | 4 | 7.5 |
| | Technical/Engineering | 1 | 1.9 |
| | Senior-Level Mgmt. | 3 | 5.7 |
| | Executive-Level Mgmt. | 2 | 3.8 |
| Marital Status | Single (never married) | 27 | 47.4 |
| | Married | 28 | 49.1 |
| | Divorced | 2 | 3.5 |

Note. *N* = 57

There was a significant difference in the ratings of perceived sexism for hostile sexism ($M = 4.95$, $SD = .22$) and benevolent sexism ($M = 4.68$, $SD = .48$) conditions ($t = 2.24$, $p = .03$) (see table 2). In that, participants in the hostile sexism condition rated Mr. Williams as significantly more sexist compared to participants in the benevolent sexism condition. There was also a significant difference in the ratings of perceived sexism for hostile sexism ($M = 4.95$, $SD = .22$) and no sexism control ($M = 2.84$, $SD = 1.50$) conditions ($t = 6.07$, $p = .00$). In that participants in the hostile sexism condition rated Mr. Williams as significantly more sexism compared to participants in the control condition.

Additionally, participants in the benevolent sexism condition rated Mr. Williams as significantly more sexist compared to participants in the control condition ($t = -5.09$, $p = .00$). The results are as expected and indicate participants in the hostile sexism condition rated the narrative as the most sexist, followed by participants in the benevolent sexism condition, and those in the control condition had the lowest ratings of sexism. Based upon this the narratives were deemed appropriate to use in the final study.

Table 2

Results of t-test and Descriptive Statistics for Pilot Study by Condition

| | Condition | | | | | | <i>t</i> | <i>df</i> |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------|----------|------------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| | Hostile | | | Benevolent | | | | |
| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>n</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>n</i> | | |
| Perception of Sexism | 4.95 | 0.22 | 20 | 4.68 | 0.48 | 19 | 2.24* | 25.25 |

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 2 cont.

Results of t-test and Descriptive Statistics for Pilot Study by Condition Cont.

| | Condition | | | | | | <i>t</i> | <i>df</i> |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| | Hostile | | | Control | | | | |
| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>n</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>n</i> | | |
| Perception of Sexism | 4.95 | 0.22 | 20 | 2.84 | 1.50 | 19 | 6.07** | 18.76 |

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 2 cont.

Results of t-test and Descriptive Statistics for Pilot Study by Condition Cont.

| | Condition | | | | | | <i>t</i> | <i>df</i> |
|----------------------|------------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| | Benevolent | | | Control | | | | |
| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>n</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>n</i> | | |
| Perception of Sexism | 4.68 | 0.48 | 19 | 2.84 | 1.50 | 19 | -5.09** | 21.62 |

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.**Overview of Present Study**

The present study investigated how the development of feminist identity, through which individuals become more aware of systemic gendered oppression, modern day sexism (which is more subtle and less overt than traditional sexism), and meritocracy beliefs about one's future success are related to one's attribution of causality for a negative outcome related to one's career advancement. The predictor variables (feminist identity development, type of sexism, and meritocracy beliefs) were chosen from the literature because of evidence of their relationship with locus of causality. The study sought to understand the developmental aspects of one's ability to perceive an event as sexism, specifically, through an individual's feminist identity development. Additionally, the study sought to understand how contextual variables such as the

type of sexism one experiences and personality traits, such as meritocracy beliefs, are influential in one's tendency to attribute causality of a sexist situation internally or externally.

Design

The study employed a single-factor, experimental between-subjects design with type of sexism (hostile, benevolent, or control) as the independent variable. The purpose of this study was to investigate women's perceptions of benevolent and hostile sexism as it relates to their beliefs about the causality of one's vocational advancement, particularly related to one's beliefs about internal (i.e., individual mobility) versus external (i.e., sexist discrimination) locus of causality. This study hopes to understand how women's meritocracy beliefs are also related to perceptions of sexism in workplace, given how this worldview corresponds with the tenets of third and fourth wave feminism. Additionally, this study aims to explore how a feminist identity may be a protective factor in aiding women to effectively perceive events as sexist and related to discrimination (i.e., external locus of causality), instead of internalizing a denied promotion as related to a woman's personal traits and abilities (i.e., internal locus of causality). All participants were randomly assigned into one of the three conditions (i.e., benevolent sexism, hostile sexism, no sexism control).

Participants

Participants were 311 self-identified women, recruited through a snowball technique using invitations on social media to participate in the online survey. A raffle for a chance to win a \$100 gift card was also used to incentivize participation in the study. Chances of winning the raffle were 1 out of the total 311 individuals recruited. Participants were required to be above the age of 18 and presently working full-time to participate in this study. No other inclusion criteria were used.

Instruments

In addition to a demographic inventory, a vignette based upon the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick & Fiske, 1996) and three scales were used: Causal Dimension Scale (Russell, 1982), Feminist Identity Composite Scale (Fischer et al. 2000) and the Meritocracy Beliefs Scale (Major, Kaiser, O'Brien, & McCoy, 2007).

Narratives. The participants were randomly assigned to one of three narrative conditions: hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and a control. The narrative, based upon the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick & Fiske, 1996), used exact phrases from items in the inventory (see Dardenne, Dumont, & Bollier, 2007, and Dumont, Sarlet, & Dardenne, 2010 for validation). See appendix A for specific narratives.

Ambivalent Sexism Inventory. The Ambivalent sexism inventory (ASI) is a 21-item measure of attitudes towards women, specifically hostile and benevolent attitudes (Glick & Fiske, 1996). The 21 items compose two subscales, the hostile sexism subscale, comprised of 10 items, and the benevolent sexism subscale, comprised of 11 items. Items are answered using a 6-point likert scale (0- *strongly disagree* to 5- *strongly agree*). ASI has been positively related to a number of measures of sexism including the Attitudes Towards Women Scale (Spence & Helmreich, 1972) and the Modern Sexism Scale (Swim et al., 1995). Validity of the ASI has been established, such that scores from the Hostile subscale have been linked to negative stereotypes about women and scores on the Benevolent subscale have been linked to stereotypes that place women in a positive light (Eagly, Mladinic, & Otto, 1991). Internal consistencies ranging from .83 to .92 have been reported for overall ASI total score across six studies performed by the authors. The authors also report alphas ranging from .80 to .92 for the hostile

sexism subscale and .73 to .85 for the benevolent sexism scale for student and nonstudent adult samples. See Appendix E for scale.

Feminist Identity Development Composite Scale. The scale is a composite of Feminist Identity Development Scale (Bargad & Hyde, 1991) and the Feminist Identity Scale (Rickard, 1987) (Fischer, 2000). The FID composite scale is a 39-item measure of a woman's endorsement of self-descriptive statements mapped onto the five stages of Downing and Roush's model (Moradi & Subich, 2002). Scores are calculated by averaging mean scores across items within each subscale, as well as across all items to create a continuous composite score. Higher scores indicate further identity development. Individuals can be placed into a stage by identifying the subscale with the highest means score for each participant (Saunders & Kashubeck-West, 2006). Fischer (2000) reported Cronbach alpha of .81 for a sample of adult student and nonstudent women. Researchers also reported that higher scores on the first stage Passive Acceptance (PA) were negatively correlated with involvement in women's organizations, while later stages Revelation (REV), Embeddedness and Emanation (EE), and Active Commitment (AC) were positively related. The measure was correlated to experiences of sexism in expected directions—negatively for PA and positively for the remaining stages and weakly or not at all correlated with measures of social desirability. See appendix C for full scale.

Meritocracy Ideology Composite Scale. This scale contains 8 items, composed of two 4-item subscales (Levin et al., 1998): The Protestant Work Ethic scale (PWE), a scale which measures the belief that hard work leads to success, and the Individual Mobility Belief scale (IMB), a scale which measures the belief in individual mobility (Major, Kaiser, O'Brien, & Mccoy, 2007). Higher scores indicate the system-justifying belief that status differences are a result of internal attributes, located within the individual. This composite scale uses a 7 point

likert scale ranging from 0 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). A sample item is, “If people work hard they almost always get what they want.” In a sample of Latino American undergraduates, the subscales were found to be moderately correlated $r = .41$. Researchers reported a Cronbach alpha of .73. See appendix D for full scale.

Causal Dimension Scale. The Causal Dimension scale (CDS) is a 9-item measure designed to assess how individuals perceive the causes for success and failure in achievement situations (Russell, 1982). Items are answered using a 9-point likert scale that is specific to each item. The CDS contains 3 subscales—the locus of causality, stability, and controllability. Specifically, locus of causality is a bipolar measure of how one perceives the cause of a specific event. The polar ends reflect either an internal causality (e.g., based upon personal attributes), or an external causality (e.g., based upon systemic forces). A sample item is, “Is the cause(s): something about you or something about others?” Stability is also a bipolar measure of the variability of the behavior, which caused the above event. The bipolar ends reflect beliefs about the permanence or temporariness of the behavior (e.g., variable over time or stable over time). A sample item is, “Is the cause(s): something variable over time or stable over time?” Lastly, controllability is a bipolar measure of how controllable the behavior is perceived to be, ranging from uncontrollable to controllable. A sample item is, “Is the cause(s): controllable by you or other people, or uncontrollable by you or other people?”

High scores on the CDS indicate the cause is perceived as internal, stable, and uncontrollable. Many studies have demonstrated the reliability and validity of the CDS (Mark, Mutrie, Brooks, & Harris, 1984; McAuley et al., 1985; Russell, 1982; Russell, Terborg, & Powers, 1985; Russell & McAuley, 1986). McAuley et al., (1985) found a significant relationship between perceptions of performance and attributions of causality, controllability, and stability. The researchers noted gymnasts who had received high scores and perceived their

performance to be successful attributed this to an internal cause that was stable and controllable, as compared to gymnasts who scored lower and perceived their performance as less successful. Russell and McAuley (1986) found causal dimensions were predictive of affective reactions to success (e.g. competence, gratitude, and positive affect) and failure (e.g. anger, guilt, surprise, negative affect). Additionally, they found locus of causality was the strongest predictor of affective reactions. Russell (1982) report Cronbach alphas of .87, .84, and .73 for the locus of causality, stability, and controllability subscales, respectively.

The CDS was used to measure perceptions of sexism, such that higher scores on the locus of causality scale indicate lower perception of sexism and lower scores on the locus of causality scale indicate greater perception of sexism. Given higher scores indicate the perceived cause is experienced as internal, this suggests the individual perceives the cause of not receiving a promotion as related to internal attributes, not to sexism. An individual that perceives the cause of not receiving the promotion as related to sexism is suggested to perceive the cause as external and related to systemic forces. See appendix B for full scale.

Procedure

Participants were recruited through electronic invitations, containing a link to the online survey, via social media, specifically: listservs, message boards, online groups, and site announcements. All participants first read a consent form prior to beginning the study and must signal their consent by clicking a button to continue onto the study materials. A cover story was used to describe the purpose of the study to participants. Participants were asked to participate in a study on attitudes towards hiring and advancement practices in the workplace.

All female participants were then randomly assigned to a narrative condition: hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and a control condition. Participants were then asked to complete

the Causal Dimension Scale (Russell, 1982) based on the causal attribution they make about the previous narrative. The remaining scales, Meritocracy Ideology and Feminist Identity Development Composite Scale were randomized in order so as to diminish any order effects on the results. At the conclusion of the study participants were debriefed as to the purpose of the study. APA ethical guidelines were followed and the study was approved by the IRB at the authors' institution.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The data analysis of the present study included descriptive statistics of the data, correlation analyses, one-way between subjects analysis of variance, and structural equation modeling. The procedures for analysis and data reporting are described below in the chapter. Data was properly cleaned prior to analysis to confirm that participants meet all inclusion criteria.

Descriptive Statistics

SPSS 24.0 was used to create descriptive statistics for the 311 participants. The respondents were aged 18-67 ($M = 34.00$, $SD = 10.32$). The majority of the sample was White (69.7%) middle class (50.3%) and had received higher education degrees (73.9% had received a bachelor's degree or higher). The sample comprised of mostly single (never married) (52.6%) women. A large proportion of participants were professional level in their careers (40.3%) and worked in health (15.8%) or education (16.6%) fields (See table 3 for all demographic information).

Table 3
Demographic Characteristics

| | | <i>Conditions</i> | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| | | <i>Benevolent</i> | | <i>Hostile</i> | | <i>Control</i> | |
| | | <i>Frequency</i> | <i>Percentage</i> | <i>Frequency</i> | <i>Percentage</i> | <i>Frequency</i> | <i>Percentage</i> |
| Age | | | | | | | |
| | <25 | 13 | 12.5 | 8 | 7.7 | 17 | 16.8 |
| | 25-40 | 61 | 58.7 | 67 | 64.4 | 64 | 63.4 |
| | >40 | 30 | 28.8 | 29 | 27.9 | 20 | 19.8 |
| Race | | | | | | | |
| | AA/Black | 12 | 11.5 | 11 | 10.6 | 8 | 7.8 |
| | Asian | 11 | 10.6 | 14 | 13.5 | 9 | 8.7 |
| | Hispanic/Latina | 0 | 0.0 | 8 | 7.7 | 4 | 3.9 |
| | White | 75 | 72.1 | 66 | 63.5 | 78 | 75.7 |
| | Amer. | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 1.0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Indian/Alaska | | | | | | |
| | Native | 1 | 1.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Hawaiian/Other | | | | | | |
| | Pacific Islander | | | | | | |
| | Other | 5 | 4.8 | 4 | 3.8 | 4 | 3.9 |
| Education | | | | | | | |
| | Ged/Equivalent | 1 | 1.0 | 1 | 1.0 | 1 | 1.0 |
| | High School | 5 | 4.8 | 5 | 4.8 | 6 | 5.6 |
| | Some College | 8 | 7.7 | 15 | 14.4 | 13 | 12.6 |
| | Associate's | 7 | 6.7 | 4 | 3.8 | 12 | 11.7 |
| | Degree | | | | | | |
| | Bachelor's | 49 | 47.1 | 46 | 44.2 | 48 | 46.6 |
| | Degree | | | | | | |
| | Graduate/ | 32 | 31.7 | 32 | 30.8 | 22 | 21.4 |
| | Professional Degree | | | | | | |
| | Other | 1 | 1.0 | 1 | 1.0 | 1 | 1.0 |
| Social Class | | | | | | | |
| | Lower | 5 | 4.8 | 7 | 6.7 | 4 | 3.9 |
| | Lower Middle | 20 | 19.2 | 23 | 22.1 | 25 | 24.3 |
| | Middle | 60 | 57.7 | 59 | 56.7 | 49 | 47.6 |
| | Upper Middle | 19 | 18.3 | 14 | 13.5 | 24 | 23.3 |
| | Upper | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1.0 | 1 | 1.0 |
| Level in Profession | | | | | | | |
| | Entry | 19 | 19.2 | 24 | 24.5 | 32 | 33.7 |
| | Professional | 40 | 40.4 | 47 | 48.0 | 34 | 34.7 |
| | First-Level | 11 | 11.1 | 11 | 11.2 | 16 | 16.3 |
| | Mgmt. | | | | | | |
| | Mid-Level | 18 | 18.2 | 9 | 9.2 | 9 | 9.2 |
| | Mgmt. | | | | | | |
| | Technical/Engineering | 6 | 6.1 | 1 | 1.0 | 2 | 2.0 |
| | Senior-Level | 4 | 4.0 | 2 | 2.0 | 4 | 4.1 |
| | Mgmt. | | | | | | |
| | Executive-Level | 1 | 1.0 | 4 | 4.1 | 0 | 0 |
| | Mgmt. | | | | | | |

Table 3
Demographic Characteristics Cont.

| Marital Status | Conditions | | | | | |
|----------------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|
| | Benevolent | | Hostile | | Control | |
| | Frequency | Percentage | Frequency | Percentage | Frequency | Percentage |
| Single | 50 | 48.1 | 49 | 47.1 | 53 | 51.5 |
| Married | 45 | 43.3 | 46 | 44.2 | 45 | 43.7 |
| Separated | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1.0 |
| Widowed | 2 | 1.9 | 2 | 1.9 | 1 | 1.0 |
| Divorced | 7 | 6.7 | 7 | 6.7 | 3 | 2.9 |

Note. $N = 311$.

There were no significant differences in demographic variables among experimental conditions (see Table 4) Therefore, random sampling was effective in creating equal groups.

Table 4
One-Way Analysis of Variance of Demographic Variables by Condition

| Race | <i>df</i> | <i>SS</i> | <i>MS</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>p</i> |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|
| Between groups | 3 | 3.04 | 1.01 | .635 | .593 |
| Within groups | 376 | 599.54 | 1.60 | | |
| Total | 379 | 602.58 | | | |
| Age | <i>df</i> | <i>SS</i> | <i>MS</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>p</i> |
| Between groups | 3 | 198.61 | 66.24 | 0.621 | .602 |
| Within groups | 376 | 40132.27 | 106.74 | | |
| Total | 379 | 40331.00 | | | |
| Social Class | <i>df</i> | <i>SS</i> | <i>MS</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>p</i> |
| Between groups | 3 | 3.52 | 1.17 | 1.681 | .171 |
| Within groups | 376 | 262.09 | 0.70 | | |
| Total | 379 | 265.61 | | | |
| Marital Status | <i>df</i> | <i>SS</i> | <i>MS</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>p</i> |
| Between groups | 3 | 6.49 | 2.16 | 2.026 | .110 |
| Within groups | 376 | 401.31 | 1.07 | | |
| Total | 379 | 407.80 | | | |
| Level of Edu. | <i>df</i> | <i>SS</i> | <i>MS</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>p</i> |
| Between groups | 3 | 5.80 | 1.93 | 1.38 | .248 |
| Within groups | 376 | 525.94 | 1.40 | | |
| Total | 379 | 531.73 | | | |
| Level in Career | <i>df</i> | <i>SS</i> | <i>MS</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>p</i> |
| Between groups | 3 | 9.08 | 3.03 | 1.61 | .187 |
| Within groups | 376 | 707.50 | 1.88 | | |
| Total | 379 | 716.58 | | | |

Note. *df* = degrees of freedom, *SS* = sum of squares, *MS* = mean squared

Data Cleaning Procedures. A preliminary analysis of the data revealed that overall, 32.6% of potential responses were missing. This was due to participants opening the Qualtrics survey and failing to continue in the research study beyond the informed consent page. It is suspected many individuals opened the webpage multiple times prior to participating in the actual study. The missing items were judged to be missing completely at random (i.e., not missing in any systematic way) based on the results of Little's (1988) MCAR test, $X^2 (df = 641) = 605.68 p = .84$). Therefore, available item analysis (AIA) methods were used to account for missing responses in which 66% of the scale item responses were obtained for a particular participant (Parent, 2013).

Normality Assumptions. Tests for normality were performed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests. The tests for all dependent variables (except the CDS subscales controllability and causality, for the control condition) were significant ($p < .05$) and therefore significantly deviated from normality (see Tables 5, 6, & 7). Bivariate bootstrapping techniques (Rasmussen, 1987) were used to account for distortions in the non-normal data sample. Bootstrapping is a statistical resampling technique that is appropriate for addressing issues in sample normality (Padilla & Verprinsky, 2012; 2014). Bootstrapping has shown to be particularly useful for small sample sizes, such as this data set (Bishara & Hittner, 2015).

Reliabilities. Reliabilities were considered excellent if $\alpha \geq 0.9$, good if $0.9 > \alpha \geq 0.8$, considered acceptable if $0.8 > \alpha \geq 0.7$, considered questionable if $0.7 > \alpha \geq 0.6$, and considered poor if $0.6 > \alpha \geq 0.5$ (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Overall for this sample, the attribution scales had excellent to poor internal consistency reliabilities, with alphas .92, .61, and .59 for stability, controllability and causality scales respectively. Internal consistencies were generally high to

moderate for other variables of interest, with two subscales on the FIDS having low reliability (.74 (REV) and .72 (SYN)) See Tables 5, 6, and 7 for all reliabilities.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics for Causal Dimension Scale (CDS) Factors Overall and by Condition (N =284)

| | <i>No. of Items</i> | <i>M(SD)</i> | <i>Skewness</i> | <i>Kurtosis</i> | <i>Cronbach's α</i> | <i>Kolmogorov- Smirnov (p)</i> | <i>Shapiro-Wilk (p)</i> |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Overall | | | | | | | |
| Condition | | | | | | | |
| Stability ^a | 3 | 4.97 (2.59) | -0.14 | -1.12 | .92 | .10 (.00)* | .93 (.00)* |
| Hostile | | 4.33 (2.64) | 0.33 | -1.19 | .86 | .12 (.00)* | .92 (.00)* |
| Benevolent | | 4.12 (2.42) | 0.15 | -1.03 | .94 | .15 (.00)* | .92 (.00)* |
| Control | | 6.54 (1.90) | -0.55 | -0.22 | .87 | .10 (.02)* | .94 (.00)* |
| Causality ^b | 3 | 6.44 (2.02) | -0.45 | -0.52 | .59 | .10 (.00)* | .94 (.00)* |
| Hostile | | 6.84 (2.18) | -0.79 | -0.41 | .62 | .17 (.00)* | .87 (.00)* |
| Benevolent | | 6.63 (1.93) | -0.57 | -0.12 | .52 | .11 (.00)* | .93 (.00)* |
| Control | | 5.67 (1.75) | -0.14 | -0.10 | .57 | .08 (.20) | .98 (.12) |
| Uncontrollability ^c | 3 | 4.00 (2.12) | 0.31 | -0.57 | .61 | .08 (.00)* | .95 (.00)* |
| Hostile | | 4.04 (2.31) | 0.21 | -0.84 | .62 | .12 (.00)* | .93 (.00)* |
| Benevolent | | 3.69 (2.10) | 0.55 | -0.26 | .55 | .11 (.00)* | .94 (.00)* |
| Control | | 4.44 (1.96) | 0.29 | -0.33 | .68 | .06 (.20) | .98 (.08) |

Note. ^aHigher scores on Stability indicate the cause is perceived to have high stability and low variability. ^bHigher scores on Causality indicate the cause is perceived to be related to something outside of the attributor. ^cHigher scores on Uncontrollability indicate the cause if perceived to be uncontrollable by oneself or others. * indicates significant at $p < .05$ level

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics for Feminist Identity Development Composite Scale (FIDS) Subscales Overall and by Condition (N =276)

| | <i>No. of Items</i> | <i>M(SD)</i> | <i>Skewness</i> | <i>Kurtosis</i> | <i>Cronbach's α</i> | <i>Kolmogorov- Smirnov (p)</i> | <i>Shapiro-Wilk (p)</i> |
|------------------|-------------------------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Overall | | | | | | | |
| Condition | | | | | | | |
| PA ^a | 7 | 4.24 (0.90) | 0.67 | -0.26 | .84 | .10 (.00)* | .93 (.00)* |
| Hostile | | 2.24 (0.86) | 0.78 | 0.50 | .82 | .14 (.00)* | .94 (.00)* |
| Benevolent | | 2.22 (0.91) | 0.61 | -0.68 | .86 | .11 (.01)* | .93 (.00)* |
| Control | | 2.30 (0.92) | 0.53 | -0.54 | .83 | .13 (.01)* | .95 (.00)* |
| REV ^b | 9 | 2.68 (0.72) | -0.07 | -0.40 | .74 | .08 (.00)* | .99 (.00)* |
| Hostile | | 2.51 (0.72) | -0.16 | -0.31 | .74 | .11 (.01)* | .98 (.16) |
| Benevolent | | 2.80 (0.69) | 0.17 | -0.31 | .71 | .09 (.05) | .98 (.15) |
| Control | | 2.60 (0.74) | 0.17 | -0.33 | .76 | .07 (.20) | .99 (.42) |
| EE ^c | 6 | 3.53 (0.86) | -0.33 | -0.33 | .84 | .07 (.00)* | .98 (.00)* |
| Hostile | | 4.08 (2.28) | 0.13 | -0.90 | .86 | .07 (.20) | .97 (.06) |
| Benevolent | | 3.62 (0.83) | 0.61 | -0.20 | .84 | .09 (.06) | .97 (.04)* |
| Control | | 3.43 (0.87) | -0.16 | -0.58 | .83 | .09 (.12) | .97 (.07) |
| SYN ^d | 9 | 4.09 (0.56) | -0.95 | 1.07 | .72 | .12 (.00)* | .94 (.00)* |
| Hostile | | 4.14 (0.51) | -0.57 | -0.25 | .67 | .12 (.00)* | .96 (.00)* |
| Benevolent | | 3.95 (0.67) | 0.61 | -0.20 | .80 | .11 (.01)* | .96 (.01)* |
| Control | | 4.05 (0.60) | -1.17 | 1.65 | .74 | .12 (.00)* | .96 (.00)* |
| AC ^e | 7 | 3.91 (0.71) | -0.60 | 0.16 | .83 | .10 (.00)* | .96 (.00)* |
| Hostile | | 3.96 (0.72) | -0.57 | -0.24 | .84 | .11 (.01)* | .95 (.00)* |
| Benevolent | | 3.95 (0.67) | 0.61 | -0.20 | .80 | .11 (.01)* | .96 (.01)* |
| Control | | 3.81 (0.76) | -0.57 | 0.57 | .83 | .09 (.12) | .96 (.01)* |

Note. ^aHigher scores on Passive Acceptance (PA) indicate greater endorsement of traditional gender roles. ^bHigher scores on Revelation (REV) indicate greater questioning of traditional gender roles. ^cHigher scores on Embeddedness-emanation (EE) indicate greater connection with female identity. ^dHigher scores on Synthesis (SYN) indicate development of a positive, non-stereotyped feminist identity. ^eHigher scores on Active Commitment (AC) indicate a strong focus on gender equality in everyday life.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics for Meritocracy Beliefs Overall and by Condition (N = 311)

| | <i>No. of Items</i> | <i>M(SD)</i> | <i>Skewness</i> | <i>Kurtosis</i> | <i>Cronbach's α</i> | <i>Kolmogorov- Smirnov (p)</i> | <i>Shapiro-Wilk (p)</i> |
|------------------|-------------------------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|---|------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Overall | | | | | | | |
| Condition | | | | | | | |
| IMB ^a | 4 | 2.20(1.38) | 0.38 | 0.28 | 0.81 | 0.07 (.00)* | 0.97 (.00)* |
| Hostile | | 2.26 (1.26) | 0.18 | -0.23 | 0.73 | 0.08 (.20) | 0.98 (.09) |
| Benevolent | | 2.01 (1.31) | 0.37 | -0.39 | 0.82 | 0.07 (.20) | 0.97 (.01)* |
| Control | | 2.33 (1.54) | 0.45 | -0.32 | 0.86 | 0.19 (.07) | 0.96 (.01)* |
| PWE ^b | 4 | 1.90 (1.30) | 0.14 | 0.12 | 0.81 | 0.09 (.00)* | 0.96 (.00)* |
| Hostile | | 1.90 (1.17) | 0.51 | 0.14 | .074 | 0.09 (.05) | 0.97 (.01) |
| Benevolent | | 1.82 (1.29) | 0.48 | -0.67 | 0.80 | 0.15 (.00)* | 0.95 (.00)* |
| Control | | 2.01 (1.44) | 0.85 | 0.33 | 0.87 | 0.12 (.00)* | 0.94 (.00)* |
| MB ^c | 8 | 2.05 (1.27) | 0.48 | -0.02 | 0.89 | 0.08 (.01)* | 0.97 (.00)* |
| Hostile | | 2.06 (1.13) | 0.37 | 0.28 | 0.84 | 0.07 (.20) | 0.98 (.05) |
| Benevolent | | 1.91 (1.21) | 0.20 | -0.84 | 0.89 | 0.09 (.03)* | 0.97 (.01)* |
| Control | | 2.17 (1.43) | 0.63 | -0.07 | 0.93 | 0.08 (.08) | 0.96 (.00)* |

Note. ^aHigher scores on Individual Mobility Beliefs (IMB) indicate greater endorsement of individual mobility. ^bHigher scores on Personal Work Ethic (PWE) indicate greater endorsement of personal work ethic. ^cHigher scores on Meritocracy Beliefs (MB) indicate greater endorsement of meritocracy beliefs. * indicates significant at $p < .05$ level

Correlation Analyses

Hypothesis I. To assess hypothesis I, that each stage of Feminist Identity development, as measured by the Feminist Identity Composite scale (FIDS), is related to locus of causality, as measured by the attributions of causality scale on the Causal Dimension scale (CDS), bivariate correlations were conducted. Specifically, the first stage on the FIDS (Passive Acceptance, PA) was hypothesized to be related to an internalization of sexism. The remaining stages, Revelation (REV), Embeddedness and Emanation (EE), Synthesis (SYN), and Active Commitment (AC), were predicted to be protective against internalization. Bivariate correlations were conducted by condition (i.e., Control, Benevolent, Hostile). Correlations between the factors of stability and uncontrollability were also conducted to further explore the relationship between attributions and feminist identity. The findings are reported below. Cohen's (1992) descriptions of small ($r =$

.10), medium ($r = .30$) and large ($r = .50$) effect sizes were used to determine the strength of relationships.

A statistically significant and negative correlation between the factor of causality and feminist identity was identified in the benevolent sexism condition (Table 8). Specifically, causality is negatively related to the first stage of feminist identity development, Passive Acceptance (PA). This is in support of hypothesis I. The effect size is medium based upon Cohen's (1992) benchmarks. Specifically, the correlation indicates participants who perceived the cause of not receiving a promotion in the narrative to be something that is internally located are also likely to passively endorse and accept sexist ideology (PA). Statistically significant correlations between causality and uncontrollability (moderate to large effect size) and stability (small effect size) were also identified. External causality is negatively correlated with uncontrollability and positively correlated with stability. Therefore, if one perceived the cause of not receiving a promotion, in the benevolent sexism condition, as coming from something in their environment, (i.e., sexism) they are more likely to feel the situation is controllable and intentional and stable over time (Table 8).

Table 8

Summary of Bivariate Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations for Scores on Causality, Uncontrollability, Stability, and Feminist Identity Development Composite Scale Subscales for the Benevolent Sexism Condition N = 103

| Variable | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
|----------------------|----------|-----------|---------|--------|-------|---------|--------|--------|--------|--------|----|
| 1. Causality | 6.66 | 1.94 | -- | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Uncontrollability | 3.60 | 2.02 | -0.44** | -- | | | | | | | |
| 3. Stability | 4.12 | 2.43 | 0.20* | -0.21* | -- | | | | | | |
| 4. PA | 2.24 | 0.93 | -0.36** | 0.23* | -0.15 | -- | | | | | |
| 5. REV | 2.79 | 0.66 | -0.01 | 0.07 | -0.02 | 0.06 | -- | | | | |
| 6. EE | 3.59 | 0.86 | 0.01 | -0.17 | -0.16 | -0.27** | 0.48** | -- | | | |
| 7. SYN | 4.06 | 0.58 | -0.06 | -0.02 | 0.00 | 0.11 | -0.12 | 0.10 | -- | | |
| 8. AC | 3.91 | 0.68 | 0.13 | -0.10 | -0.06 | -0.33** | 0.36** | 0.72** | 0.42** | -- | |
| 9. FEM ALL | 3.32 | 0.41 | -0.14 | 0.02 | -0.16 | 0.28* | 0.64** | 0.72** | 0.48** | 0.71** | -- |

Note. * indicated $p < .05$ ** indicates $p < .01$. *M* and *SD* are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively. PA= Passive Acceptance; REV= Revelation; EE= Embeddedness and Emanation; SYN = Synthesis; AC = Active Commitment; FEM ALL = total score on Feminist Identity Development Composite Scale. Bootstrapping based on 1000 bootstrapping samples.

Bivariate correlations for the Hostile sexism condition are found in Table 9. A statistically significant and positive correlation between the last stage of feminist identity development, Active Commitment (AC) to gender equality and attributions causality was identified (Table 9). The effect size is small to medium based upon Cohen’s (1992) benchmarks. In addition, a statistically significant and negative correlation between the first stage of feminist identity development, Passive Acceptance (PA) of sexism and attributions of causality was identified in the hostile sexism condition. The effect is also small to medium caused upon Cohen’s (1992) benchmarks. These findings are in support of hypothesis I. Specifically, the correlations indicate participants who perceived the cause of not receiving a promotion in the narrative to be related to something outside of themselves, are also likely to endorse an active

commitment to social justice and equality for all (AC), and those who perceive the cause to be related to something inside of themselves, are likely to passively accept sexism (PA).

Table 9
Summary of Bivariate Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations for Scores on Causality, Uncontrollability, Stability, and Feminist Identity Development Composite Scale Subscales for the Hostile Sexism Condition N= 104

| Variable | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
|----------------------|----------|-----------|--------|-------|-------|---------|--------|--------|--------|--------|----|
| 1. Causality | 7.00 | 2.08 | -- | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Uncontrollability | 4.04 | 2.28 | -0.14 | -- | | | | | | | |
| 3. Stability | 4.22 | 2.62 | 0.05 | -0.15 | -- | | | | | | |
| 4. PA | 2.24 | 0.86 | -0.23* | 0.07 | 0.09 | -- | | | | | |
| 5. REV | 2.65 | 0.72 | -0.00 | -0.06 | 0.04 | -0.09 | -- | | | | |
| 6. EE | 3.48 | 0.88 | 0.01 | -0.17 | -0.16 | -0.13 | 0.54** | -- | | | |
| 7. SYN | 4.17 | 0.50 | -0.02 | 0.01 | 0.10 | -0.03 | -0.04 | 0.30** | -- | | |
| 8. AC | 3.93 | 0.73 | 0.20* | -0.03 | -0.04 | -0.34** | 0.49** | 0.72** | 0.50** | -- | |
| 9. FEM ALL | 3.30 | 0.44 | 0.05 | -0.01 | 0.07 | 0.19 | 0.67* | 0.84** | 0.49** | 0.76** | -- |

Note. * indicated $p < .05$ ** indicates $p < .01$. *M* and *SD* are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively. PA= Passive Acceptance; REV= Revelation; EE= Embeddedness and Emanation; SYN=Synthesis; AC=Active Commitment; FEM ALL= total score on Feminist Identity Development Composite Scale. Bootstrapping based on 1000 bootstrapping samples.

Bivariate correlations for the Control no-sexism condition are found in Table 10. The analysis indicates a statistically significant and negative correlation between a measure of causality and Passive Acceptance (PA) of sexism. Specifically, results reveal participants who passively accept the existence of sexism are more likely to attribute the cause of not receiving a promotion—even when sexism is not implicated—as due to something about themselves and internally located, supporting hypothesis I. The effect size is small to medium based upon Cohen’s (1992) benchmarks.

Table 10

Summary of Bivariate Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations for Scores on Causality, Uncontrollability, Stability, and Feminist Identity Development Composite Scale Subscales for the Control No Sexism Condition N = 96

| Variable | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
|----------------------|----------|-----------|---------|-------|---------|---------|--------|--------|--------|--------|----|
| 1. Causality | 5.66 | 1.73 | -- | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Uncontrollability | 4.32 | 1.86 | 0.54 | -- | | | | | | | |
| 3. Stability | 6.56 | 1.92 | -0.12 | -0.10 | -- | | | | | | |
| 4. PA | 2.31 | 0.91 | -0.27** | 0.05 | -0.05 | -- | | | | | |
| 5. REV | 2.56 | 0.75 | 0.18 | 0.06 | -0.30** | -0.37** | -- | | | | |
| 6. EE | 3.36 | 0.92 | 0.01 | 0.01 | -0.09 | -0.39** | 0.59** | -- | | | |
| 7. SYN | 4.04 | 0.59 | 0.00 | -0.09 | 0.17 | -0.14 | -0.21* | 0.17 | -- | | |
| 8. AC | 3.75 | 0.80 | 0.08 | -0.10 | 0.03 | -0.46** | 0.39** | 0.67** | 0.51** | -- | |
| 9. FEM ALL | 3.20 | 0.40 | -0.02 | -0.02 | -0.11 | -0.09 | 0.57** | 0.83** | 0.43** | 0.79** | -- |

Note. * indicated $p < .05$ ** indicates $p < .01$. *M* and *SD* are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively. PA = Passive Acceptance; REV = Revelation; EE= Embeddedness and Emanation; SYN=Synthesis; AC =Active Commitment; FEM ALL = total score on Feminist Identity Development Composite Scale. Bootstrapping based on 1000 bootstrapping samples.

Hypothesis II. To assess hypothesis II, that meritocracy beliefs are also related to internalized sexism, bivariate correlations were conducted between meritocracy beliefs (as measured by MB) and the measure of attributions from the CDS (i.e., causality, uncontrollability, and stability). Cohen’s (1992) descriptions of small ($r = .10$), medium ($r = .30$) and large ($r = .50$) effect sizes were again used to determine the strength of relationships. Two significant relationships were identified between meritocracy beliefs and attributions of causality and were isolated to the hostile sexism condition. This supports hypothesis II.

Correlations between individual mobility beliefs (IMB) and overall meritocracy beliefs (MB) and causality were significant for attributions of causality in the Hostile sexism condition

(see Table 11). The effect sizes were small to medium based upon Cohen’s (1992) benchmarks.

Specifically, participants who perceived the cause of not receiving a promotion in the hostile sexism narrative to be related to something outside of themselves (i.e., overt sexism), were also less likely to endorse individual mobility beliefs (IMB) and overall meritocracy beliefs (MB).

All other bivariate correlations were not significant (Tables 12 & 13).

Table 11

Summary of Bivariate Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations for Scores on Causality, Uncontrollability, Stability, and Feminist Identity Development Composite Scale Subscales for the Hostile Sexism Condition N = 104

| Variable | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|----------------------|----------|-----------|--------|-------|------|--------|--------|----|
| 1. Causality | 7.00 | 2.08 | -- | | | | | |
| 2. Uncontrollability | 4.04 | 2.28 | -0.12 | -- | | | | |
| 3. Stability | 4.22 | 2.62 | 0.02 | -0.16 | -- | | | |
| 4. IMB | 2.26 | 1.26 | -0.20* | 0.07 | 0.03 | -- | | |
| 5. PWE | 1.86 | 1.17 | -0.15 | -0.04 | 0.09 | 0.72** | -- | |
| 6. MB | 2.06 | 1.12 | -0.19* | 0.02 | 0.06 | 0.93** | 0.92** | -- |

Note. * indicated $p < .05$, ** indicates $p < .01$. *M* and *SD* are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively. IMB = Individual Mobility Beliefs; PWE= Personal Work Ethic; MB = Overall Meritocracy Beliefs. Bootstrapping based on 1000 bootstrapping samples.

Table 12

Summary of Bivariate Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations for Scores on Causality, Uncontrollability, Stability, and Feminist Identity Development Composite Scale Subscales for the Benevolent Sexism Condition N = 103

| Variable | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|----------------------|----------|-----------|---------|--------|------|--------|--------|----|
| 1. Causality | 6.66 | 1.94 | -- | | | | | |
| 2. Uncontrollability | 3.60 | 2.02 | -0.45** | -- | | | | |
| 3. Stability | 4.12 | 2.43 | 0.22* | -0.25* | -- | | | |
| 4. IMB | 2.26 | 1.26 | -0.10 | 0.08 | 0.05 | -- | | |
| 5. PWE | 1.86 | 1.17 | -0.00 | 0.06 | 0.03 | 0.73** | -- | |
| 6. MB | 2.06 | 1.12 | -0.06 | 0.08 | 0.04 | 0.93** | 0.93** | -- |

Note. * indicated $p < .05$, ** indicates $p < .01$. *M* and *SD* are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively. IMB = Individual Mobility Beliefs; PWE= Personal

Work Ethic; MB = Overall Meritocracy Beliefs. Bootstrapping based on 1000 bootstrapping samples.

Table 13

Summary of Bivariate Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations for Scores on Causality, Uncontrollability, Stability, and Feminist Identity Development Composite Scale Subscales for the No Sexism Control Condition N = 99

| Variable | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|----------------------|----------|-----------|-------|-------|-------|--------|--------|----|
| 1. Causality | 5.66 | 1.73 | -- | | | | | |
| 2. Uncontrollability | 4.32 | 1.86 | 0.08 | -- | | | | |
| 3. Stability | 6.17 | 1.92 | -0.13 | -0.11 | -- | | | |
| 4. IMB | 2.34 | 1.55 | -0.14 | -0.05 | -0.02 | -- | | |
| 5. PWE | 2.02 | 1.44 | -0.14 | -0.13 | -0.04 | 0.85** | -- | |
| 6. MB | 2.18 | 1.44 | -0.15 | -0.09 | -0.03 | 0.96** | 0.96** | -- |

Note. * indicated $p < .05$, ** indicates $p < .01$. *M* and *SD* are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively. IMB = Individual Mobility Beliefs; PWE = Personal Work Ethic; MB = Overall Meritocracy Beliefs. Bootstrapping based on 1000 bootstrapping samples.

Analysis of Variance

Hypothesis III. SPSS 24.0 was used to analyze the third hypothesis, that type of sexism, as manipulated by the condition, will be related to internalized sexism as measured by attributions of causality. Specifically, it was predicted that women in the hostile sexism condition would be more likely than women in the benevolent sexism and control conditions to accurately identify sexism. To determine if there is a significant difference in attributions of causality among the three conditions a one-way ANOVA was conducted. The effect of type of sexism on attributions of causality (i.e., CDS, causality subscales) was compared among the conditions. A one-way ANOVA is the appropriate statistical analysis to use when researching if mean differences exist between one continuous dependent variable and an independent variable with two or more categorical groups (Pagano, 2004). The *t*-test was two-tailed with the probability of rejecting the null hypothesis when it is true set at $p < .05$. This ensures a 95%

certainty that the differences are not due to chance.

Given an ANOVA is a parametric test and the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance have not been met in the sample, bootstrapping estimates will again be used in analyses. There was a significant effect of condition on causality at the $p < .05$ level [$F(2, 83.06) = 10.74, p = .000$ (See table 14).

Post-hoc comparisons using Tukey HS test indicated that the mean score of causality for the control condition ($M = 6.30, SD = 2.23$), was significantly different from both hostile and benevolent conditions ($M = 7.54, SD = 2.46; M = 7.31, SD = 2.43$). However, benevolent and hostile conditions did not significantly differ from each other on any scale items.

Table 14
One-Way Analysis of Variance of Attribution of Causality by Condition

| Source | <i>df</i> | <i>SS</i> | <i>MS</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>p</i> |
|----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|
| Between groups | 2 | 83.06 | 41.53 | 10.74 | .000 |
| Within groups | 324 | 1252.86 | 3.87 | | |
| Total | 326 | 1335.92 | | | |

Note. *df*= degrees of freedom, *SS*= sum of squares, *MS*= mean squared

ANOVA Comparison of Attribution of Causality by Condition

| Group | <i>n</i> | Mean | <i>SD</i> | Tukey's HSD Comparison | | |
|------------|----------|------|-----------|------------------------|------------|---------|
| | | | | Hostile | Benevolent | Control |
| Hostile | 110 | 7.54 | 2.46 | - | .706 | .000 |
| Benevolent | 112 | 7.31 | 2.43 | - | - | .001 |
| Control | 105 | 6.30 | 2.23 | - | - | - |

Note. *SD* =standard deviation

Taken together, these results suggest that sexism—both benevolent and hostile—is perceived as having a stronger external locus causality, compared to a no-sexism control condition. Specifically, the results suggest when women are exposed to either overt or covert forms of sexism, they are equally likely to perceive the cause of the event to be something

outside of themselves, compared to when women are exposed to a situation that does not involve sexism. Benevolent sexism does not appear to significantly increase one's internal locus of causality compared to hostile sexism, as was hypothesized in the 3rd hypothesis. Therefore, this suggests, inconspicuous or subtle forms of sexism, as well as blatant and overt forms, are uniformly attributed to something about the situation and not internalized by the individual. However, results of the structural equation modeling suggest the relationship may be more complex and nuanced.

Primary Analyses

Structural Equation Modeling

Hypothesis IV. To assess the final and 4th hypothesis that locus of causality is a function of three variables: feminist identity development, type of sexism (hostile, benevolent, and no sexism control), and meritocracy beliefs, Structural Equation Modeling was used. Factors of uncontrollability and stability were included in analyses due to their significant correlations with variables of interest. Exogenous indicators were decided based upon correlational analyses for each condition. Using Version 8.1 of Mplus statistical package (Muthen & Muthen, 2017), Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analyses for each of the condition were conducted to determine if there were significant differences in the relationship caused by the manipulation of conditions. Path models allow researchers to test direct and indirect effects and thus are suitable for analysis.

Maximum likelihood estimation and bootstrapping procedures were used given the non-normal distribution of the data. While, ML has been shown to be robust against violations of the normality assumption (Boomsma & Hoogland, 2001; Chou & Bentler, 1995; Curran, West, & Finch, 1996), “[bootstrapping] is the most appropriate [method of analysis] for models with non-

normal, continuous indicators” (Brown, 2015), as well as for ML estimation with small samples (Shipley, 2000). The exploratory models were recursive and just-identified for each condition. The comparative fit indices (CFI) = 1.00, the Tucker-Lewis fit index (TLI) = 1.00, the Standardized Root Mean Squared Residual (SRMR) = .000, and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = .000. The Chi-Square test of model fit could not be calculated due to the justified fit of the models.

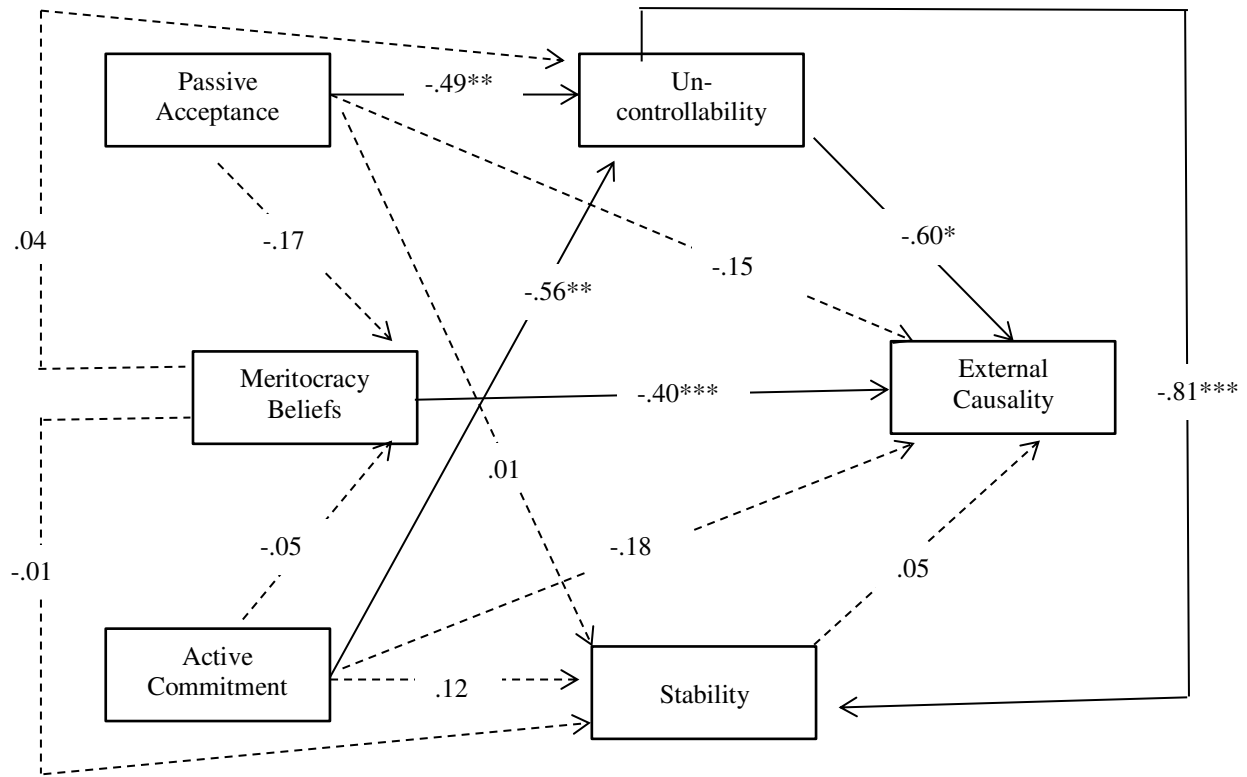


Figure 1. Benevolent Sexism Path model. Passive Acceptance of sexism and Active Commitment to gender equality have direct effects on attributions of uncontrollability. Passive Acceptance and Active Commitment have indirect effects on attributions of causality through attributions of uncontrollability. Uncontrollability has direct effects on External Causality and Stability. Meritocracy Beliefs have a direct effect on External Causality. Values reflect standardized coefficients. Dashed lines indicate nonsignificant paths. $*p < .05$; $**p < .01$; $***p < .001$. $N = 104$.

Benevolent Sexism Direct Effects. Exogenous indicators, Passive Acceptance (PA) of sexism, Active Commitment (AC) to gender equality, were directly and negatively related to endogenous indicator, Uncontrollability ($\beta = -.49$, $c.r. = -2.78$, $p = .005$; $\beta = -.56$, $c.r. = -3.40$, $p = .001$, respectively). Therefore, salient gender roles beliefs—both passive acceptance of sexism and/or active commitment to gender equality—are related to women’s perception that the reason for the benevolent sexist event in the workplace is controllable and intentional. Meritocracy Beliefs (MB) were directly and negatively related to endogenous indicator Causality, ($\beta = -.40$,

c.r. = -4.06, $p < .001$). This indicates women who hold meritocracy beliefs were more likely to attribute the cause of modern sexism in the workplace to be internally caused; this finding supports hypothesis II. Uncontrollability had direct and negative effects on Stability ($\beta = -.81$, c.r. = -7.83, $p < .001$) and Causality ($\beta = -.60$, c.r. = -1.96, $p = .049$)—however the latter result was marginally significant. This result indicates women who attribute the cause of a benevolent sexist event to be controllable and intentional were also likely to attribute it to be stable overtime and externally caused. All other direct effects were not significant.

Table 15
Magnitude and Significance of Total Indirect Relations for the Benevolent Sexism Condition

| Predictor | Mediator | Criterion | Standardized indirect relation | | Unstandardized indirect relation | | 95% CI | |
|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|------|----------------------------------|------|-------------|-------------|
| | | | β | c.r. | β | c.r. | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| Active Commitment | Uncontrollability | External Causality | 0.34 | 1.26 | 0.25 | 1.26 | 0.11 | 1.11 |
| Passive Acceptance | Uncontrollability | External Causality | 0.29 | 1.91 | 0.14 | 0.84 | 0.10 | 1.04 |

Note. CI = confidence interval

Indirect Effects. It was hypothesized the relationship between feminist identity development (as measured by PA and AC in this model) and attributions of Causality would be mediated by MB. Results do not support this hypothesis. However, results indicate the relationship between feminist identity (PA and AC in this model) and attributions of Causality is mediated by attributions of Uncontrollability. The indirect paths from PA and AC to Causality through Uncontrollability had standardized coefficients of ($\beta = .29$, c.r. = 1.91, $p = .23$, 95% CI = [0.10, 1.04], and $\beta = .34$, c.r. = 1.26, $p = .21$, 95% CI = [0.11, 1.11], respectively) (see table 15).

There is a discrepancy between the p -values and the confidence intervals for each indirect pathway above. The p -values indicate the indirect pathways are nonsignificant, while the confidence intervals suggest the pathways are significant, given they do not contain zero. When

discrepancies between *p*-values and confidence intervals arise, it is recommended that confidence intervals be used given their superior precision (Greenland et al., 2016). Therefore, the relationship between feminist identity and Causality is partially mediated by Uncontrollability, given the direct pathways between both PA and AC and Causality were not significant, the indirect pathways from PA and AC to Causality through Uncontrollability were significant and the direct pathways between AC and Uncontrollability, PA and Uncontrollability, as well as Uncontrollability and Causality were significant.

However, it should be noted that the effect sizes of the indirect pathways are smaller in magnitude compared to the effect sizes of the direct pathways. Therefore, one may conclude that the primary mediator of interest in the relationships between AC and PA with Causality is Uncontrollability, and that the likelihood of any additional mediators from this model is slight (Rucker, Preacher, Tormala, & Petty, 2011). This indicates that a salient feminist identity, either passive acceptance of sexism or commitment to gender equality, is related to the perception of benevolent sexism in the workplace as controllable and intentional. And given Uncontrollability is negatively related to external locus of Causality, when not receiving a promotion is perceived as uncontrollable and unintentional, the situation is likely to be perceived as internally caused by one's own personhood.

Therefore, strong views regarding gender roles, are related to attributions that the benevolent sexist reasons for not receiving a promotion in the workplace are something that is controllable, and related to attributions that it was caused by something outside themselves. An extreme perspective on feminism is related to an external locus of causality in the benevolent sexism condition as explained by one's perceptions of controllability. Overall, the findings do not support hypothesis IV, however, they do illuminate the complex relationship between

attributions of causality and feminist identity development. All other indirect effects were nonsignificant (See Figure 1).

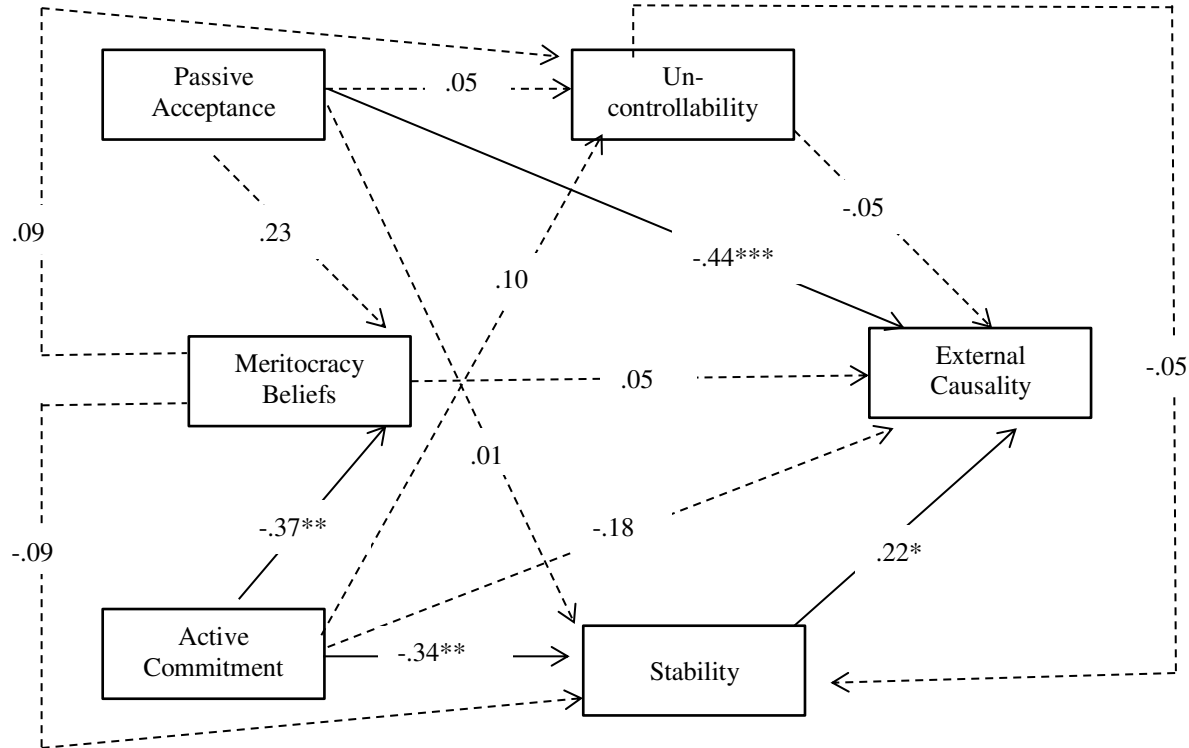


Figure 2. Hostile Sexism Path model. Passive Acceptance of sexism has a direct effect on External Causality. Active Commitment to gender equality has an indirect effect on External Causality through Stability. Stability has a direct effect on External Causality. Active Commitment has a direct effect on Meritocracy Beliefs. Values reflect standardized coefficients. Dashed lines indicate nonsignificant paths. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. $N = 104$.

Hostile Sexism Direct Effects. For participants in the hostile sexism condition, exogenous variable Passive Acceptance (PA) of sexism was directly and negatively related to endogenous variable attributions of Causality ($\beta = -.44$, $c.r. = -4.95$, $p < .001$). Therefore, a passive acceptance sexism is related to women’s tendency to attribute the cause of the hostile sexist event in the workplace to be internally caused. All other direct effects of PA were nonsignificant. Active Commitment (AC) to gender equality was directly and negatively related to endogenous variable Meritocracy Beliefs (MB) ($\beta = -.37$, $c.r. = -2.68$, $p = .007$). Therefore,

active commitment to gender equality is related to women holding fewer meritocracy beliefs. AC was also directly and negatively related to endogenous variable, Stability ($\beta = -.34$, $c.r. = -3.06$, $p = .002$). This indicates, engagement in gender equality activism is related to women's attributions that the reason for the hostile sexist event is unstable over time. All other direct effects of AC were nonsignificant. Attributional factor, Stability was directly and positively related to endogenous variable Causality ($\beta = .22$, $c.r. = 2.27$, $p = .023$). Therefore, women who experienced the blatantly sexist reason for not receiving a promotion as stable and not subject to change over time were more likely to attribute the cause to be externally located and related to sexism. All other direct effects were nonsignificant.

Table 16
Magnitude and Significance of Total Indirect Relations for the Hostile Sexism Condition

| Predictor | Mediator | Criterion | Standardized indirect relation | | Unstandardized indirect relation | | 95% CI | |
|-------------------|-----------|--------------------|--------------------------------|-------------|----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | | | β | <i>c.r.</i> | β | <i>c.r.</i> | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| Active Commitment | Stability | External Causality | -0.07 | -1.74 | -0.11 | -1.76 | -0.16 | -0.004 |

Note. CI = confidence interval

Indirect Effects. It was hypothesized the relationship between feminist identity development (as measured by PA and AC in this model) and attributions of Causality would be mediated by MB. Results do not support this hypothesis. However, results do support mediation in the relationship of AC and Causality through Stability. The relationship between AC and Causality is partially mediated by Stability given the indirect path from AC to Causality through Stability has standardized a coefficient of ($\beta = -.07$, $c.r. = -1.74$, $p = .08$, 95% CI = [-0.16, -0.004]) and is significant, based upon the 95% CI (See table 16). Therefore, the relationship between AC and Causality is partially mediated by Stability, given the direct pathway between AC and Causality is not significant, the indirect pathway from AC to Causality through Stability

is significant and the direct pathways between AC and Stability, as well as Stability and Causality were also significant.

As in the benevolent sexism condition, there is a discrepancy between the p -value and the confidence interval values for the indirect pathway between AC and Causality through Stability. The p -value indicates the indirect pathway is nonsignificant, while the confidence interval suggests the pathway is significant, given it does not contain zero. The confidence interval was used to determine significance due to its superior precision, compared to p -values (Greenland et al., 2016). Therefore, the relationship between PA and Causality is partially mediated by Stability, given the direct pathway between AC and Causality was not significant, the indirect pathway from AC to Causality through Stability was significant and the direct pathways between AC and Stability, as well as Stability and Causality were also significant.

However, it should again be noted that the effect size of the indirect pathway is smaller in magnitude compared to the effect sizes of the direct pathways. Therefore, one may conclude that the primary mediator of interest in the relationship between AC and Causality is Stability, and that the probability of any additional mediators from this model is slight (Rucker, Preacher, Tormala, & Petty, 2011).

This indicates that an increase in activism and commitment to reducing sexism is related to women's perceptions of hostile sexism as unstable over time. Further, stability is positively related to attributions of external Causality, therefore, a blatantly sexist rationale as to why a woman did not receive a promotion and attributions that the reason is something that is unstable overtime, are related to the situation being perceived as internally caused. An active commitment to reducing sexism appears to be related to an internal locus of causality in the hostile sexism condition due to one's perceptions of stability. It is possible that a salient

commitment to gender equality is related to women attributing the hostile sexist reason of not receiving a promotion as something that is unstable and likely to change over time, given modern culture is transitioning away from overt forms on sexism. Further, the perception of instability may bolster a desire to change the situation and create a sense of empowerment within activist women and this attribution explains why their attributions of causality turn inward to explain why an event happened. However, this dynamic has dangerous implications of internalizing sexism over time.

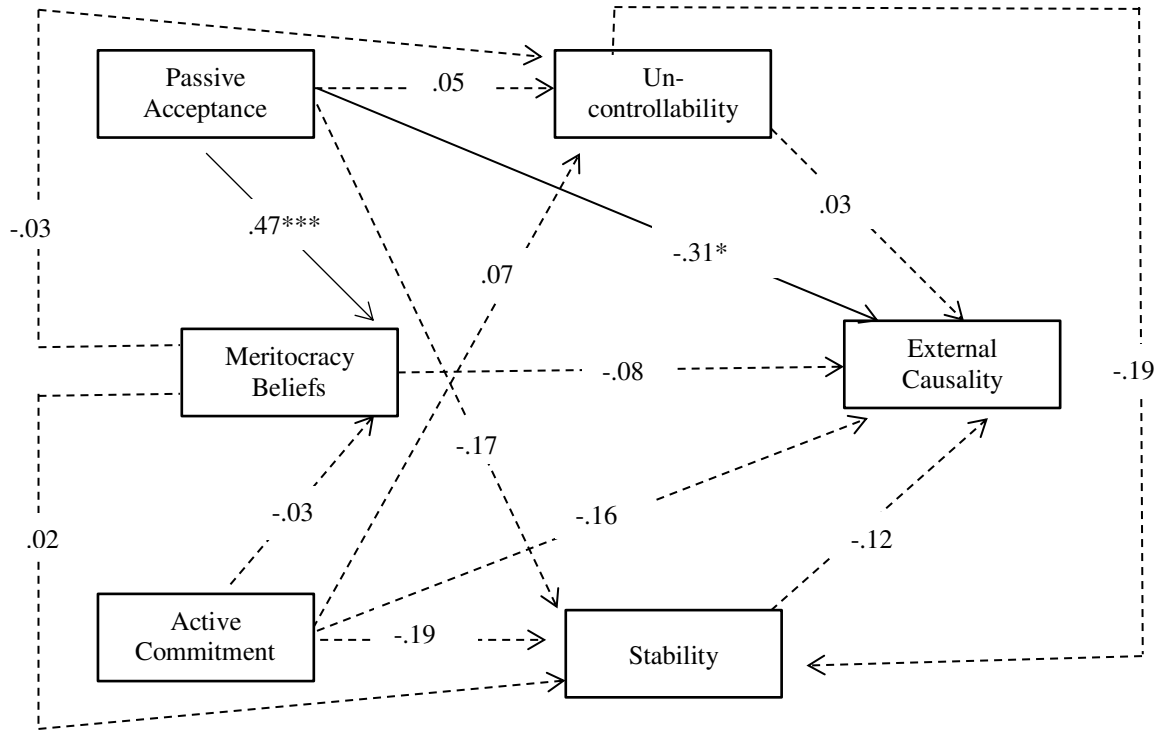


Figure 3. No Sexism Control Path model. Passive Acceptance of sexism has a direct effect on External Causality and Meritocracy Beliefs. Values reflect standardized coefficients. Dashed lines indicate nonsignificant paths. ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. $N = 98$.

Control Condition Direct Effects. For participants in the no sexism control condition, results revealed exogenous variable Passive Acceptance (PA) of sexism, was directly and negatively related to endogenous variable Causality ($\beta = -0.31$, $p = .021$) and directly and positively related to endogenous variable MB ($\beta = 0.47$, $p < .001$). Therefore, salient beliefs about passively accepting sexism, are related to women’s increased likelihood of attributing the non-sexist reason for not receiving a promotion as caused by something about themselves, as well as an increased likelihood they hold meritocracy beliefs. All other direct effects were not significant.

Indirect Effects. There were no significant indirect effects.

Summary of Path Analysis Results. The hypothesis that the relationship between feminist identity and attributions of causality was mediated by meritocracy beliefs was not

supported by any of the models. However, the relationship between feminist identity and attributions of causality was mediated by other attributional variables. In addition, three identical, just identified models were fitted for each condition (i.e., benevolent, hostile, and control). Each path model fit uniquely, indicating the dynamic among the variables of interest is contingent upon the type of sexism experienced.

Summary of Results

Overall, results indicate that hypotheses I-III were supported. Hypothesis IV was partially supported by the results. Specifically, hypothesis I was supported in that negative correlations were identified between the first stage of feminist identity development, Passive Acceptance (PA) and external locus of causality in all experimental conditions (e.g. hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, no sexism control). In addition, the final stage of feminist identity development Active Commitment (AC) was positively related to attributions of external causality in the hostile sexism condition. Therefore, denying the existence of sexism is related to attributing the cause of not receiving a promotion, regardless of the rationale that was provided, to something about one's personhood. There is evidence that a well-developed feminist identity is protective, however only for instances of overt sexism. Specifically, the results indicate the commitment to developing gender equality is related to an external locus of causality (i.e., protective against internalizing overt forms of sexism), compared to the denial of sexism.

Hypothesis II was supported. Meritocracy beliefs were negatively related to attributions of causality, when viewed in isolation and not taking into consideration other factors in the hostile sexism condition. Specifically, participants who perceived the cause of not receiving a promotion, in the hostile sexism narrative, to be related to something inside of themselves (i.e., internalized sexism), were also more likely to endorse individual mobility beliefs (IMB) and

overall meritocracy beliefs (MB).

However, after controlling for covariates, the relationship between meritocracy beliefs and causal attributions changes based upon the type of sexism experienced. When controlling for attributions of controllability and stability as well as feminist identity, the relationship between MB and attributions of causality becomes significant in the benevolent sexism condition. MB is directly related to internalized benevolent sexism. Whereas, the opposite occurs in the hostile sexism condition. After controlling for covariates of attributions of stability, uncontrollability, and feminist identity, the relationship between MB and causality is extinguished. MB does not directly impact internalization of hostile sexism after taking into account feminist identity and other attributional factors. Therefore, a sense of empowerment may be most detrimental for modern day forms of sexism.

Hypothesis III was partially supported in that women both the hostile and benevolent sexism conditions were more likely to attribute the cause of not receiving a promotion to external events, (e.g., sexism) compared to the control condition. This relationship did not hold true for hostile sexism compared to benevolent sexism.

Lastly, hypothesis IV was partially supported. The relationship between feminist identity development and attribution of causality was not mediated by meritocracy beliefs in any of the conditions. Instead, the relationship was mediated by variables of uncontrollability and stability in the experimental conditions. The results revealed that attributions of stability and controllability are important in determining causality for both hostile and benevolent sexism conditions, but not for the no sexism control condition. Further, mediation did not occur in the

control condition.

However, as noted above, the relationship between meritocracy beliefs and the remaining variables proved important in understanding the overall relationship between causal attributions, modern day sexism, and feminist identity. Progressive feminist identity beliefs are related to internalized hostile sexism when the scenario is perceived as unstable, whereas a denial of sexism is related to internalized hostile sexism regardless of other factors. Both primary and progressive levels of feminist identity are related to internalized benevolent sexism when the scenario is perceived as intentional. Thus, strong beliefs about gender roles—either at the level of denial or active commitment to equality—are related to internalization of sexism and this relationship is mediated by attributions of stability and controllability.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Overview of Chapter

The following section will review the results of the study. Specifically, this section will outline the relationship between feminist identity and internalization of sexism; intentionality, stability, and internalization of sexism; causal attributions, feminist identity and internalization of sexism; attributions of controllability, meritocracy beliefs, and internalized sexism; and feminist identity, meritocracy beliefs, and internalized blatant sexism. This section will finally summarize all results, review limitations to the study and implications for both future research and practices of counseling.

Summary of Research Study

This study sought to explore how modern day sexism is perceived by women, specifically, in the workplace, and how its perception may be affected by tenets of third and fourth-wave feminism, favoring independence and empowerment. In addition, how might perception of more overt forms of sexism differ from perception of modern day sexism in the workplace? And lastly, how might a feminist identity act as a protective factor in reducing women's likelihood to internalize sexism. This was done by examining women's meritocracy beliefs, feminist identity, and perceptions of sexism in experimental conditions of modern day sexism and overt, hostile sexism, compared to a no sexism control group. Perceptions of sexism were operationalized as women's perception of locus of causality—specifically, internalization of sexism was operationalized as women locating the cause of not receiving a promotion inside of themselves. Whereas accurate detection of sexism was operationalized as women locating the cause of not receiving a promotion outside of themselves.

Feminist Identity and Internalization of Sexism. The results confirm that feminist identity development is related to attributions of sexism in the workplace, specifically attributions of causality. However, experiences of overt sexism are not perceived as markedly more sexist, compared to covert forms of modern day sexism, as was originally predicted. Women are equally likely to attribute sexism in the workplace, both overt and covert, as caused by something systemic and in their environment. However, feminist identity appears to play an important role in one's ability to accurately detect sexism.

When looking in isolation at the correlations between variables, not considering other factors, the results suggest endorsing traditional gender roles and denying the existence of sexism is linked with attributing the cause of events related to one's career development as due to something about themselves and internally caused. This denial of sexism is likely to affect women's perceptions of their lived experiences and contribute to an internalization of sexism. The acceptance of traditional gender norms—i.e., women are innately more susceptible to danger and weakness, men are intrinsically secure and powerful (Hunnicut, 2009) and women are positively pure and warm, but incompetent and in need of men's protection (Glick & Fiske, 1996)—maintains a system in which women are dependent upon men.

Therefore, the endorsement of this belief system is related to attributing the cause of not progressing in one's career as due to something about one's intrinsic weakness and inferiority in comparison to men. However, it is important to note that the findings indicate the impact of one's belief in and support of patriarchy was pervasive across conditions when not accounting meritocracy beliefs or attributions of stability and causality. Therefore, it may be that a lack of awareness or denial of women's gendered oppression, is related to locating the cause of not advancing in one's career as due to something about one's personhood. The tenacity of some

women's denial of sexism is seemingly resilient even in the face of overt forms of sexism. This is supported by previous research indicating those in early stages of feminist identity, are less likely to perceive discrimination over the lifetime, in comparison to later stages (Moradi & Subich, 2002).

Further, the results of the bivariate correlations suggested a well-developed feminist identity (i.e., Active Commitment) is protective against internalizing sexism, however, only when exposed to overt forms of sexism (i.e., hostile sexism condition). Therefore, it appeared regardless of a woman's feminist identity and awareness of gender inequality, the insidious effects of modern day sexism are unavoidable. This suggested that the covert nature of modern day sexism is largely inescapable and exceedingly difficult to detect.

However, upon closer inspection and utilization of structural equation modeling (SEM), whereby other variables such as meritocracy beliefs (MB) and attributional factors of stability and controllability are controlled for, the results suggest the relationship between feminist identity and perception of sexism is unique and differs based upon the type of sexism experienced. The results suggest an active commitment to gender equality may actually be associated with women being *more* vulnerable to internalizing hostile sexism due to one's attributions of instability. Specifically, a salient commitment to gender equality and perception of hostile sexism as unstable and transient are related to internalizing hostile sexism and attributing the cause of the situation as due to something about one's personhood. A commitment to social justice and equal rights for women may contribute to women experiencing hostile sexism as something fleeting and surprising, given blatant forms of sexism are usually admonished in current society. This attribution of instability appears to also encourage women to attribute the cause of the hostile sexist events to something internal.

Additionally, extreme identities of feminism (i.e., both Passive Acceptance and Active Commitment) may *both* be protective against internalizing benevolent sexism, due to one's perception of intentionality. Specifically, both denial of sexism and active commitment to gender equality, may protect women from internalizing modern day sexism due to women with extreme levels of feminist identity development also perceiving benevolent sexism as intentionally caused. Thus, when accounting for and holding constant one's focus on independence and strivings for success (i.e., meritocracy beliefs), as done in SEM, the extreme ideologies of both denying the existence of sexism and being wholly committed to and focused on ending sexism, appear to allow women to accurately detect the intentionality and purposefulness behind benevolent sexism. Both findings will be discussed in further detail below.

Intentionality, Stability, and Internalization of Sexism. First, this section will review of importance of attributions of controllability and its role in perception of sexism. The results suggest taking into account perceptions of controllability—attributions that what caused the event was intentional and for which someone is responsible (Russell, 1982)—is important to understand the relationship between feminist identity and attributions of causality, particularly for modern day sexism. Specifically, when women are exposed to modern day sexism in the workplace and perceive the cause as uncontrollable and unintentional, they are also likely to perceive the cause as related to something about their personhood, thereby internalizing sexist ideology. This finding is supported by a multitude of research wherein perceptions of controllability, responsibility, and intentionality were found to effect one's perception of discrimination (Blodorn, O'Brien, & Kordys, 2012; Grant, 2012; Weiner, 1993). When an event is perceived as unintentional it is less likely to be attributed to discrimination. However, in this

study this finding was only pertinent to modern day, covert forms of sexism and not overt, hostile sexism.

Overt sexism, on the other hand, is more likely to be accurately perceived if a woman perceives the cause as something that is stable and unchanging overtime. This suggests if a woman experiences blatant sexism and attributes it to something fleeting or unlikely to occur again, she is also likely to internalize the reason for the event and ignore the chance that it is related to sexism. One way of understanding this finding is based upon the field of heuristics, wherein individuals use judgments of likelihood under uncertainty—specifically, individuals generate inferences based upon the known likelihood or probability of an event occurring to make causal attributions (Kahneman & Tversky, 1972, 1973; Tversky & Kahneman, 1982).

Women who experience hostile sexism as transient may do so because their schema of modern day sexism does not include blatant and hostile expressions of sexism—therefore, the perceived likelihood of this blatant form of sexism occurring again are low, and it is experienced as likely to change over time. Blatant forms of sexism are rarely experienced in modern day culture, and therefore have a low availability heuristic, i.e., are believed to occur infrequently. Consequently, when hostile sexism is experienced, a woman may attribute it to being a fluke or coincidence, given her present cognitive schema of gender equality does not contain expressions of hostile sexism.

Alternatively, given the largely White sample (69.7%) this finding may be explained by White women's implicit bias towards upholding the status quo, even when outwardly refuting it. Implicit bias is defined as unconscious and involuntary attitudes that impact how individuals make perceptions and evaluate events (Saul, 2013; Hermanson, 2017). Unconscious biases are on the rise, given the current culture of political correctness pushes one's biases out of

consciousness and subsequently channels them into implicit biases (Sue et al., 2007). Further, White women may implicitly wish to protect sexism, because much of their success has been afforded to them through their ties—biologically, socially, martially, professionally etc.—with men (Christensen, 1997). As noted by Holvino (2010), “Affluent White heterosexual women may collude with White men in the private sphere while fighting the ‘male oppressor’ in the public one” (p. 255). It is suggested that many White participants may have imagined the male managers in the narrative to be White men, with whom historically, White women have needed to maintain a connection with in order to maintain security. Therefore, women may have expressed disdain for patriarchy “in the public sphere” through their responses to the feminist identity development scale (Fischer, 2000) and “in the private sphere” colluded with men by creating excuses for men’s problematic behavior and ultimately internalizing the blame.

Therefore, it seems the present advances in women’s equality, and belief that American society is moving towards greater egalitarianism (Diekmann & Eagly, 2000; Tinklin et al., 2005), may actually be detrimental to women’s accurate detection of blatant sexism, in part because of the influence of implicit biases. White women may be apt to unconsciously deny the existence of hostile sexism, given they may be biased to maintain their connection with White men. In addition, given the current conceptualization of American culture is one of equality and progressiveness, the availability heuristic of blatant sexism is low, indicating individuals are likely to judge the probability that blatant forms of sexism occur as quite unlikely. Therefore, the movement away from overt demonstrations of sexism to covert forms, act to obscure even hostile sexism from a woman’s purview.

Conversely, when a decision pertaining to a woman’s career development is made, without any implications of sexism, her attributions of controllability and intentionality, or

stability, do not appear to affect her attributions regarding what caused the decision. For example, if a woman is told she did not receive a promotion because she did not have enough experience and there were no indications that her gender was involved in the decision-making process, the attributions she makes about the stability and controllability of the reason for not receiving a promotion are insignificant. She will still make attributions regarding how stable and intentional the reason is, however compared to when sexism is implicated, these attributions do not factor into the overall causal attribution of the event. When sexism is not a factor, the attributions of causality, controllability, and stability are independent of each other.

Causal Attributions, Feminist Identity and Internalization of Sexism. In contrast, after taking into account attributions of controllability and intentionality, the results suggest the relationship between feminist identity and causal attributions of sexism changes when women are exposed to modern day sexism. Surprisingly, both the first and final levels of feminist identity are related to perceptions of controllability, wherein the cause of benevolent sexism is perceived as controllable, intentional, and for which someone can be held responsible.

The latter aligns well with current research, specifically, women whose passion about feminism and gender equality is salient to their identities, are able to detect modern day forms of sexism in the workplace (Moradi & Subich, 2002; Sabik & Tylka, 2006), due to their attributions of controllability—particularly if they perceive the event as intentional and hold someone responsible for the event (Major & Sawyer, 2009). An understanding of gender inequality and actively striving to fight against discrimination aids women in perceiving modern day forms of sexism as intentional. The perception of intentionality may be what allows women to accurately attribute the cause of modern day sexism to something systemic and outside of themselves. It is likely the identity of an activist also increases one's sense of control and perceived ability to

impact their environment and create change, thereby making her feel the event can be changed.

However, the result that a salient denial of sexism is also likely to increase a woman's perception of the cause of benevolent sexism as something intentional and externally located in their environment, is confounding and requires deeper investigation. Overall, the findings indicate modern day sexism is perceived as controllable for women in extreme levels of feminist identity development and because it is perceived as intentional, women perceive modern day sexism to be caused by something or someone in their environment. This finding is surprising and contrary to what the literature suggests and what was previously hypothesized. One method of understanding this paradox may be that more nuanced and less strongly convicted beliefs about gender roles, associated with transitioning levels of feminist identity development, (i.e., revelation, embeddedness emanation, synthesis, revelation (Fisher et al., 2000)) contribute to women experiencing modern day sexism as uncontrollable and unintentional and therefore, attribute the cause to be internally located.

The strong conviction of beliefs, noted in either extreme level of feminist identity development (PA or AC), may provide a buffer against internalizing modern day sexism. While the direction of beliefs is polarized, one adamant about dismantling sexism (i.e., AC), and one indicating sexism no longer exists (i.e., PA), the end result is the same despite different rationales used to get there. One possibility is that a salient denial of sexism and exposure to modern day sexism, increases women's likelihood of attributing the cause as intentional because women view men as chivalrous individuals who are attempting to protect women from dangers or stressors. Therefore, given men are thought of as valiant, they are also held responsible for their courage and heroism and these acts are viewed as intentional.

Conversely, a salient and active striving for gender equality coupled with exposure to

benevolent sexism, increases the likelihood women understand the reason they did not receive a promotion as intentional, possibly because they identify the subtle message of inherent weakness in women and hold individuals in power responsible for this message. Therefore, instead of viewing men as valiant, men are viewed as oppressive and patronizing. Nevertheless, in either situation those in power (in this particular scenario, men in power) are endowed with responsibility.

Attributions of Controllability, Meritocracy Beliefs, and Internalized Sexism. The above relationship may also be explained by the covariate meritocracy beliefs (MB). Specifically, the results of the structural equation modeling (SEM) suggest when MB are controlled for, the benefit of acknowledging the existence of sexism in one's ability to accurately detect modern day sexism disappears. This means denial of sexism is no longer directly related to how well women are able to detect covert sexism, whereas the bivariate correlations indicated denial of sexism was related to an internalization of sexism. For instance, this may mean that after controlling for the effects of meritocracy beliefs, the direct relationship between passive acceptance of sexism and attributions of modern day sexism becomes insignificant. Therefore, the findings suggest after the impact of meritocracy beliefs on a denial of sexism is held constant, the direct relationship with causality of modern day sexism is better explained by meritocracy beliefs, and not a denial of sexism. This indicates, that holding the shared variance among feminist identity (i.e., PA, AC), attributions (i.e., stability, controllability), and meritocracy beliefs constant, the unique variance between meritocracy beliefs and attributions of causality is significant.

The results suggest the relationship between meritocracy beliefs and locus of causality, when experiencing modern day sexism, is statistically significant only when taking into

consideration feminist identity and other causal attributions. This suggests the relationship between meritocracy beliefs and causality is noteworthy, only after the common variance of feminist identity and other attributional variables are held constant. Therefore, in isolation, not accounting for the complex relationship among all of the variables, the relationship between meritocracy beliefs and attributions of causality is hidden.

The finding that women who hold meritocracy beliefs were also likely to internalize modern day sexism is supported by previous research (McCoy & Major, 2007; Stephens & Levine, 2011). However, the impact meritocracy beliefs have on the relationship between feminist identity development and perceived controllability is a new addition to the literature. While not previously hypothesized about, the relationship between meritocracy beliefs and stages of feminist identity development was investigated to shed further light on the relationship between controllability, meritocracy, and feminist identity (see appendix F).

Post-hoc bivariate correlations were conducted between feminist identity development subscales PA and AC—given their significance in relation to causal attributions—and the overall meritocracy beliefs scale (MB) to further elucidate the overall relationship among feminist identity, meritocracy beliefs, and causal attributions of sexism. Significant correlations were identified between PA, AC, and MB for all three conditions. Specifically, PA was positively correlated with MB with moderate to large effect sizes in each condition. In addition, AC was negatively correlated with MB with moderate effect sizes in each of the conditions. These findings are as expected based upon hypotheses and previous research.

For instance, denial of sexism is associated with meritocracy beliefs, whereas an active commitment to eliminating sexism is associated with a denial of meritocracy beliefs. However, both denial of sexism and active commitment to eliminating sexism are related to attributions of

controllability. Therefore, once the differences in meritocracy beliefs between different stages of feminist identity are taken into account, the relationship between meritocracy beliefs and attributions of causality for benevolent sexism then becomes significant

This relationship among meritocracy beliefs, feminist identity, and controllability, can be understood as the part of passive acceptance of sexism that shares qualities and traits with meritocracy beliefs, may increase a woman's perception of controllability, given meritocracy beliefs are associated with individual mobility and success through individual hard work. This part of meritocracy beliefs shared with denial of sexism, provides a sense of control and because the sexist event is experienced as controllable it is also experienced as stable and externally caused.

Therefore, the steadfast denial of sexism provides women with a firm structural belief system, one that promotes the status quo and is akin to meritocracy beliefs. This acceptance of the status quo provides a sense of control. The sense of control a woman feels due to her meritocracy beliefs and denial of sexism informs her attributions of causality when she experiences benevolent sexism, in that she is able to attribute the cause to something outside of herself, for which she is not responsible. It may be because she accepts traditional ideologies, specifically, those that encourage female domesticity that she is able to accurately identify external societal expectations.

However, the other part of meritocracy beliefs, the part that is not associated with passive acceptance, may act to empower a woman to strive towards success and overcome obstacles she sees in her path, which causes her to internalize the benevolent sexism and see it as something internally caused that she needs to overcome. It appears meritocracy beliefs have a dual role in both reversing and bolstering one's tendency to internalize modern day sexism. Holding

meritocracy beliefs and denying the existence of sexism may aid women in seeing men as responsible for upholding the status quo in a just-world, which in effect allows women to distance themselves from their own personal involvement in sexism.

Research by Hammond, Sibley, and Overall (2014) may offer an additional perspective on another factor that is associated with both meritocracy beliefs and modern day sexism. Hammond, et al., (2014) suggest that women's endorsement of benevolent sexism is related to a sense of psychological entitlement, which "encompasses feeling that the self deserves nice things, social status and praise" (p. 423). They note that benevolent sexism legitimizes the core beliefs of entitlement—that one is special, superior (through beliefs about superior purity and morality of women), and deserving of praise. The tenets of psychological entitlement are reminiscent of that of empowerment noted in third and fourth-wave feminism—specifically, that of individual discovery and pursuit of self-fulfillment (Budgeon, 2011). The focus on individuality in third and fourth-wave feminism endorses a narcissistic focus on one's self that may be related to a sense of entitlement which, contributes to the existence and persistence of benevolent sexism.

When controlling for meritocracy beliefs related to one's sense of entitlement and focus on individuality, the dynamics between feminist identity and recognition of modern day sexism change. The identical relationship between opposing spectrums of feminist identity development and perception of controllability for modern day sexism is surprising, given it was hypothesized that polarizing views on gender roles would lead women to make vastly different causal attributions. However, this change in the relationship is due to controlling for meritocracy beliefs, as compared to when bivariate correlations were conducted and passive acceptance of sexism had a negative relationship with external causality and active commitment to gender

equality had a positive relationship. Thus, meritocracy beliefs play a vital role in understanding the complex relationship between women's views on gender roles and perception of modern day sexism.

Perhaps, given meritocracy beliefs are related to women's internalization of modern day sexism (McCoy & Major, 2007; Stephens & Levine, 2011), it possible that the relationship between feminist identity and accurately detecting modern day sexism is moot after controlling for one's meritocracy beliefs. Possibly, after meritocratic beliefs related to passive acceptance of sexism are controlled for, the remaining influence of a denial of sexism on attributions of causality is negligible. The results suggest women's sense of empowerment and meritocratic beliefs are the key factors in understanding the antecedents to detecting modern day sexism.

Conceivably, the present "code of empowerment" doctrine of third and fourth-wave feminism is wide reaching and internalized by working women regardless of their feminist identity. Further, given the ambiguous nature of modern day sexism, working women may feel tasked to self-monitor, looking for internal obstacles that are preventing their progression upward in the workplace. Additionally, research notes the guise of promoting gender equality in the work place—a prominent goal of our current politically correct culture (Hughes, 2011)—differentially benefits men over women (Iannello, 2010) and leaves women attributing the reason for events as related to their personhood, not sexism.

The obfuscating nature of modern day sexism, focus on individuality in third and fourth-wave feminism (Valentine, Jackson, & Mayblin, 2014), and belief in individual mobility, contribute to women looking for a sense of control, someone to hold responsible, and given many workplaces are touted as gender neutral (Kelan, 2009), women must turn inward to find this. The importance of controllability in one's perception of causality as well as the importance

of meritocracy beliefs is supported by research findings that women who believe in individual mobility are less likely to state they were discriminated against when rejected by a man, compared to women who do not endorse individual mobility beliefs (Major, et al., 2002).

Feminist Identity, Meritocracy Beliefs, and Internalized Blatant Sexism.

Additionally, the current research indicates the relationship between meritocracy beliefs and accurate detection of overt sexism was significant in isolation, however, when accounting for the variability and relationship of other variables with locus of causality (i.e., feminist identity and attributions of stability) its correlation lost significance. This suggests that the association of meritocracy with one's ability to accurately identify hostile sexism, is fully accounted for by feminist identity and one's attribution of stability. The findings suggest the relationship between meritocracy beliefs, feminist identity, and ability to detect sexism is significant for both blatant and furtive forms of sexism, however the interplay among the variables changes.

When feminist identity is accounted for, the relationship between meritocracy beliefs and attributions of causality of hostile sexism is negligible and it appears a denial of sexism has the most direct relationship with internalizing hostile sexism, holding all other variables constant. Post-hoc analyses (see appendix F) indicate early and late stages of feminist identity development have opposite relationships with meritocracy beliefs. Specifically, passive acceptance of sexism is positively related to meritocracy beliefs and active commitment to gender equality is negative related to meritocracy beliefs, regardless of type of sexism. Meaning denying the existence of sexism is related to holding meritocracy beliefs and women who are passionate about eliminating sexism are less likely to hold meritocracy beliefs. Therefore, the overall effect of meritocracy beliefs on causal attributions of hostile sexism is cancelled out due to the suppressor effect of feminist identity in the model. The impact meritocracy beliefs have

on women's understanding of why they failed to receive a promotion after being given a blatantly sexist rationale, is trivial after taking into account feminist identity and attributions of the stability of the situation.

This may be an example of "gender fatigue", as previously outlined by Kelan (2009), a phenomenon noted in working women who are presented with a work place that is "gender neutral." Well intentioned organizations opt to decrease the visibility of gender, given they espouse beliefs of gender equality. However, given sexism prevails and continues to exist, the constant disconnect between women's internal reality (experiences of sexism) and the reality that is presented in society (constructing the workplace as gender neutral), women who are aware of sexism experience "gender fatigue". This fatigue is understood as women withdrawing from continually reconstructing and tackling something, (i.e., sexism) that society no longer sees as a problem.

Specifically, the dynamic between an active feminist identity and commitment to change workplace dynamics from patriarchal to egalitarian, may actually leave women vulnerable to internalizing the blame for not being promoted in their careers when exposed hostile sexism. The extreme disconnect between women's internal experience and the reality they have been told exists in postfeminist society, may leave them confused and withdrawn from reality. In unconscious efforts to manage their gender fatigue and they may experience the overly sexist situation as fleeting or transient (i.e., unstable over time), and subsequently turn inward to explain why a situation occurred.

Further, a study by Pacilli et al., (2018) noted the relationship between hostile sexism and anxiety is moderated by system justifying beliefs. Specifically, participants with the lowest system justifying beliefs—i.e., low meritocracy beliefs—had the highest levels of anxiety. This

indicates meritocracy beliefs likely are adaptive for some individuals and provide a buffer against experiences of anxiety for some individuals. Given the current study found women with an active commitment to gender equality are less likely to endorse meritocracy beliefs, it is suggested they may be the most likely to experience heightened anxiety after being exposed to hostile sexism. Their experience of anxiety may then contribute to their perception of the event as transient and likely to change over time, given if they believed hostile sexism was likely to go this would reduce their anxiety.

This is also supported by the direct relationship between passive acceptance of sexism and internalization of hostile sexism, even when controlling for meritocracy beliefs and other attributional factors. A denial of sexism is protective against experiencing anxiety and distress after being exposed to system justifying beliefs (Pacilli et al., 2018) and therefore, the attributions women make about the situation's stability or controllability are not as noteworthy if denial of sexism is salient.

Summary

Overall, based on the results, feminist identity development is related to attributions of causality regardless of type of sexism. However, this is not simply explained by feminist identity development's relationship with meritocracy beliefs. Instead, it appears the relationship is vastly more complex and dependent upon other attributional factors, as well as the type of sexism experienced.

The present research suggests that feeling one benefits from the status quo and having no desire to challenge gender inequality is related to women internalizing hostile sexism, compared to feeling that one needs to actively fight for gender equality. However, this finding was only found for the hostile sexism condition, not the benevolent sexism condition. This notion is

support by research that suggests identity characteristics (i.e., race, gender, socioeconomic status) influence one's motivation to maintain or challenge the status quo (Tyler, 2006). Specifically, researchers found that "low status members" (i.e., members from a socially discriminated group) are more likely to perceive and attribute subtle forms of discrimination as discriminatory because of their motivation to dismantle the status quo and gain control over the valued resources. Therefore, women who identify as coming from a low status group, (i.e., women who have internalized a feminist identity) may be more likely to attribute both overt and covert forms of discrimination as discriminatory because of their motivation to disrupt the status quo. Given women who deny the existence of sexism and appreciate traditional gender norms are not likely to identify as a member of a low status group, and therefore have less motivation to disrupt the status quo.

Further, research has found different racial groups adopt different perspectives on evaluation of discrimination (Simon, Moss, & O'Brien, 2019). The researchers note perspective-taking is an important variable in understanding how different racial groups perceive discrimination. Particularly Black participants in their study attributed an event as discriminatory after taking into account the intentionality of the aggressor and the perceived harm felt by the victim, whereas White participants did not take the perspective of the victim into account when deciding if the event was discriminatory. Therefore, one's ability to relate to individuals who are subjected to discrimination and identify with the felt experience of oppression are better able to accurately perceive discrimination. Again, women who support traditional gender norms may be less able to take perspective of a woman who felt she was the victim of sexism, given they do not endorse this ideology and do not have similar experiences to draw upon.

Additionally, findings of the current study indicate women who endorse meritocracy beliefs are more likely to internalize modern day sexism, even after controlling for type of sexism and other attributional factors. This result is supported by research indicating individuals who hold system justifying beliefs are less likely to identify structural discrimination (Zimmerman & Reyna, 2013), more likely to perpetuate systematic injustices by internalizing the oppression (Frost, 2011), and identify discrimination as a personal failing related to their own deficits (Prilleltensky, 2008).

The results from the current study illuminate the complex effects of feminist identity on attributions of causality, and highlight the importance of continuing research in this area. The previously hypothesized protective relationship between feminist identity and internalization of sexism is incorrect and perhaps too simplistic after exploring its relationship with meritocracy beliefs and attributions of stability and controllability.

Overall, the results suggest women take into account a significant amount of information from their environments when attributing what impeded their ability to progress in their careers. Further, when women are subjected to sexism, their information processing changes and expands to gather additional information. Specifically, to determine the reason for not being promoted, women take into account additional variables when they are exposed to both overt and covert sexism, compared with when not exposed to sexism. This suggests regardless of how women attribute the cause of a situation—either to sexism or to something about themselves—the method in which they engage with information in their environment changes when exposed to hostile and benevolent sexism, as compared to when they are not exposed to any sexism. This indicates that regardless of women's final causal attributions—either internally or externally attributed—in an effort to determine the locus of causality, women must assess their environment

in a more precise and effortful manner. Therefore, a qualitative change exists in women's way of interacting with sexism. A change that exudes a greater cognitive toll compared to when they are not experiencing sexism.

This cognitive toll of information processing can lead to "information overload," or the experience that one has when the amount of information one needs to interpret feels too much to handle (Zhang et al., 2016). Research suggests that "when individuals' limited information processing capacity is challenged by heavy information, they tend to have the feeling of losing control and are more likely to get confused" (p. 905). Further, information overload is associated with mental and emotional fatigue, feelings of stress, anxiety, and helplessness (Wurman, 1989). Therefore, the results of this study indicate women may be more likely to experience a plethora of distressing psychological symptoms after being exposed to sexism, given they are tasked with processing additional information in order to attribute the reason for not receiving a promotion. This suggests that even when women are able to accurately detect sexism in the workplace, they are not protected from its detrimental effects. The cognitive toll of gathering information to accurately assess a situation is great and has negative psychological consequences.

Implications for Practice, Research, and Theory

Clinical Implications. Experiences of sexism have notably and repeatedly been associated with women's psychological distress (Fischer & Holz, 2007; Moradi & Subich, 2002, 2003, 2004; Szymanski, 2005; Szymanski & Owens, 2009). Further, research indicates a denial of sexism is related to a multitude of psychological symptoms such as somatization, obsessive compulsivity, depression, anxiety, hostility, and paranoid ideation (Moradi & Subich, 2002). In addition, the prominence and focus on sexism and sexual harassment of women in the workplace, specifically following the #MeToo movement, has bolstered attention on the subject.

However, the dearth of knowledge regarding how women perceive modern day sexism and specifically, what factors contribute to the internalization of modern day sexism, leaves psychologists without the necessary resources to prevent such negative outcomes.

The findings of this study, specifically that denial of sexism is directly linked to internalization of hostile sexism, supports the need to focus on the relationship between internalized sexism and feminist identity development. Specifically, focusing on how an acceptance of traditional gender roles is likely to leave women susceptible to internalizing blatant sexism and its subsequent harmful effects. In addition, the findings of this study suggest clinicians should be particularly sensitive to women's psychological distress, as the present wave of feminism and current culture of political correctness have shifted the locus of causality inward and moved prejudice underground. Therefore, the implicit nature of sexism coupled with the empowerment doctrine forced upon women, as evidenced by the direct relationship between meritocracy beliefs and internalized benevolent sexism, may leave women feeling confused or unaware of the causes of their psychological distress. Clinicians need to be aware of the mystifying dynamics of women's career advancement to provide clarity and perhaps psychoeducation in efforts to alleviate distress.

Further, the potential for self-silencing behaviors in women (i.e., putting the needs of others before the needs of herself to maintain a relationship (Jack, 1991)) is strong, given research indicates women are prone to prioritizing relationships and the needs of others above their own needs (Szymanski, Ikizler, & Dunn, 2016). The results indicate that a salient belief in promoting gender equality, may be related to women self-silencing and questioning their experience when exposed to hostile sexism. Psychologists and mental health professionals should be mindful to evaluate how women may minimize or internalize sexism in the workplace

and support ways to challenge women's ineffective relational schemas, encourage reflection on how gender and sexist experiences at work contribute to and maintain faulty belief systems, balance the needs of self and others and promote skills to manage interpersonal conflicts by asserting one's needs (American Psychological Association, 2016).

Implications for Future Research. Future research should clarify if there are different outcomes for women who identify the reason for not advancing in one's career as due to their gender versus due to sexism. Specifically, the present study asked women to describe why they did not receive a promotion; many women in both the hostile and benevolent sexism conditions indicated it was due to their female gender. For example, participants indicated, "Mr. Williams did not want to consider a woman for the position," and "They think that as a woman I personally would not be a good fit because the environment the management has to work with is toxic and they think a man could handle it better" and "Mr. Jones preferred a male in the position."

Future research should clarify if women who identified the reason they did not receive a promotion was due to their gender—as noted above—made different causal attributions compared to women who specifically cited sexism or misogyny as the reason for not receiving a promotion. For example, participants in both experimental conditions noted reasons for not receiving a promotion as due to discrimination, specifically, "Mr. Williams is sexist and blinded by his prejudices," and "Misogyny from my immediate supervisor," and "A man assumes I'm not capable of doing a job because his misogynistic views about women cause him to think we're not able to handle it."

While the distinction may appear slight, future research should elucidate if identifying the reason for not receiving a promotion as due to misogyny or sexism from one's supervisor is

related to an external locus of causality, and if this holds true when identifying one's gender as the reason for not receiving a promotion. Specifically, given one's gender is related to one's personhood, it is unclear if women who identified gender as the reason for not receiving the promotion were also able to separate this from something about their personhood or still internalized the reason as due to something about themselves.

Future research should also investigate more specifically how attributions of controllability and stability influence perceptions of sexism. While the current study did not originally intend to investigate these attributions, it became apparent that their inclusion was necessary to understand the overall relationship among locus of causality, feminist identity, and meritocracy beliefs. Moving forward researchers may wish to create experimental conditions of the remaining attribution variables, i.e. stability and controllability, to more conclusively understand their roles in perceiving modern day sexism.

Researchers may also want to clarify how more transient and fluctuating views on gender roles and feminism, (i.e., middle stages of feminist identity development) are related to attributions about the cause of sexism. Particularly, given the results of the present study found extreme stages of feminist identity development had similar effects on attributions of modern day sexism—increasing one's ability to identify its external causality—it would be important to understand if middle and developing levels of feminist identity are related to internalizing modern day sexism.

In addition, research by Daganzo, Bernardo, and Wakefield (2018) notes socioeconomic status is a factor in determining one's attributions of causality and controllability. However, results of this study do not support their findings. Socioeconomic status was a determinate of attributions of stability only when women are exposed to hostile sexism. Daganzo, et al., (2018)

suggest that upper class individuals are more “inclined to attribute the cause of problem situations as being internal, changeable, and controllable and as something for which they are personally responsible for the solution” (p. 1). However, this may not be true when individuals are subjected to discrimination, specifically sexism. The authors investigate individuals’ responses to “life stage events” such as failing an exam. Further research is required to clarify the differences in findings, specifically to investigate if individuals attribute personal responsibility to a situation differently when exposed to discrimination compared to “life stage events.”

Moreover, research on self-silencing in women may also shed light on this finding. Specifically, as noted above women may have cognitive schemas for relationship maintenance, i.e., putting the needs of others before the needs of herself to maintain a relationship, and this may lead women to suppress thoughts and feelings that could jeopardize their relationships (Jack, 1991). Future research should investigate the relationship of self-silencing on perception of sexism, specifically comparing modern day and blatant sexism.

Future research should also investigate the relationship between perception of sexism and imposter syndrome. Breeze (2018) highlights imposter syndrome—the feeling of incompetence and fundamental fraudulency—is marked by intersectional identities, specifically she reinforces the importance of understanding imposter syndrome through the lens of intersectionality. She notes that individuals from oppressed backgrounds are more likely to experience imposter syndrome. Further, citing Abu-Lughod (1990), Breeze states imposter syndrome can be understood as a “diagnostic of power” and used as an informative tool to evaluate power structures and imbalances in society. Future research should clarify how perception of sexism is

related to imposter syndrome, given it is likely if one feels they are inherently incompetent they may be more likely to internalize sexism.

Lastly, future research should evaluate one's affective and emotional reaction to experiences of sexism. Particularly, future research should investigate how anxiety may moderate the relationship among feminist identity development, meritocracy beliefs, and perception of sexism. In addition, understanding one's affective reaction to the modern day sexism condition, may provide clarity in understanding the results. Specifically, it is suspected that denying the existence of sexism and being exposed to benevolent sexism would produce a positive valance, i.e., emotional response, such as gratitude, thankfulness, or understanding from an individual. Whereas, an active commitment to gender equality and exposure to benevolent sexism would likely produce a negative valance, i.e. emotional response, such as anger, frustration, or annoyance from an individual.

Limitations of the Present Study

There are a number of limitations to the present study that may have impacted its results and generalizability of the findings. The sample size is relatively small, making it more difficult to find significant relationships between variables. In addition, the reliability of some of the variables was lacking and therefore limits the scope of the analyses and may be an obstacle in finding trends and meaningful relationships in the data. The poor reliability of some of the subscales on the Causal Dimension Scale (Russell, 1982) is likely due to the small number of items on each subscale.

The generalizability of the findings is limited to White, working women who are educated and identify as middle class. Due to the snowball sampling technique used, the sample was likely taken from a particular subpopulation in society, of which the research had little

control over. Therefore, the representativeness of the population is not guaranteed (Sadler, Lee, Lim, & Fullerton, 2010). It is also likely that participants share certain personality traits that were not accounted for in the study, as snowball sampling tends to gather individuals with like characteristics (Magnani et al., 2005).

Further, the quantitative nature of this study may limit and obscure the information about the population being studied. Specifically, due to the exploratory nature of this study, there are nuances and complexities that may not be explicitly clear through quantitative inquiry and may require qualitative inquiry to elucidate the exact nature of the phenomenon.

In addition, this study was cross-sectional in nature and therefore cannot provide causal information regarding the relationship between variables. Further, due to the narratives being introduced before the measures of feminist identity and meritocracy beliefs, it is possible the experimental conditions impacted outcome measures. For instance, it is unknown how or if participants were primed to respond based upon their reactions to the experimental conditions. It is possible after reading an experimental narrative, participants were primed to respond with stronger attitudes regarding feminism and gender roles, compared to participants in the control condition.

Summary and Conclusions

Currently, women are instructed to adhere to a “code of empowerment” (Rennison, 2004, p. 13), wherein they are encouraged to overcome traditional gender norms through engagement in self-promotion and internalizing responsibility for one’s own success (Rivers, 2017). Further, the myth of meritocracy fundamentally ignores differences between individuals and in its place, crafts an illusion that individuals are equally likely to achieve success. No known study to date has investigated the relationship between a woman’s perception of sexism in the workplace and

the interrelated themes of individualism, empowerment, and self-promotion inherent in third and fourth-wave feminism. The results from the current study highlight the precarious nature of holding strong views of self-promotion given meritocracy beliefs are related to an increase in internalized benevolent sexism.

The present study highlights that modern day and hostile sexism are perceived and understood in qualitatively distinct manners. Attributions of controllability and stability are pertinent in understanding a woman's causal attributions of sexism. Specifically, one's experience of controllability plays a key role in perceiving modern day sexism and perceptions of situational stability are important in attributing the cause of hostile sexism. Attributions of controllability and stability do not impact the causal references one makes to workplace situations not involving sexism. Therefore, it is more cognitively taxing to make causal inferences about sexist situations compared to non-sexist scenarios. Further, the way one makes causal inferences about benevolent vs. hostile sexism differs and they are perceived in distinctly different ways.

Feminist identity and meritocracy beliefs are both important factors related to women's attributions of sexism. Both a denial of sexism and an active commitment to gender equality have protective and harmful implications on the likelihood that women will internalize sexism. Extreme views of feminism—either denial or active commitment—are protective due to their likelihood of increasing one's attributions of intentionality. Specifically, denial of sexism appears to protect against internalizing modern day sexism due to women attributing the cause as not receiving a promotion as intentional—perhaps men are experienced as acting chivalrously and saving women from a toxic work environment. Similarly, active commitment to gender

equality appears to be protective by allowing women to detect the subtle intentionality behind benevolent sexism, as maintaining patriarchy and suppressing women's freedom.

Conversely, when experiencing hostile sexism, regardless of perceived intentionality, denial of sexism is harmful and does not protect against internalizing sexism. Specifically, denial of sexism is directly related to an internal locus of causality when experiencing hostile sexism. Similarly, although surprisingly, when exposed to hostile sexism, an active commitment to gender equality is linked with an internal locus of causality, due to one's attributions of instability. An active commitment to equality contributes to viewing hostile sexism as something that is transient and likely to change. This is perhaps due to the low heuristic value of blatant forms of sexism in modern day society. Therefore, because of this perception, women appear to locate the cause of hostile sexism within themselves, given, based on heuristics, hostile sexism is unlikely to exist in current society.

Overall, the perception of sexism is nuanced and complex, dependent upon the type of sexism, one's degree of development in their feminist identity, attributions of causality, and one's beliefs about individual success and self-promotion. However, what remains unquestionable is the detrimental impact that sexism has on a woman's overall cognition and the fact that the subtle nature of modern day sexism, coupled with a focus on women's empowerment, influences women's perception of sexism in a potentially injurious manner.

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APPENDIX A

Narratives

Imagine the following scenario:

You work as an executive assistant at a local media company, for Mr. Jones, who heads up the advertising section of the company. You have been at this company for three years and you work full time. You have a good relationship with Mr. Jones, however you feel you would like to take on more responsibility in hopes of advancing in the company. You applied for a promotion to a managerial position two weeks ago. You work hard but have made a few errors in the past that have cost the company money to repair. You originally struggled to maintain organization and there were occasions where you double booked Mr. Jones for meetings. You have made your best effort to remain diligent and learn from these past mistakes, and believe you are ready to be promoted. During the interview, you met with the head of the media company, Mr. Williams, who is superior to Mr. Jones.

During your interview, you were asked about how you would manage the increased workload and responsibility of the promotion, specifically noting the need for organizational skills. You were also asked how you would see your relationship with upper management, such as Mr. Williams and Mr. Jones, and what you would need from management to be successful. You felt satisfied with your responses and left the interview feeling positive. You recently receive an email from your boss that reads:

Hostile Sexism Condition

Hello,

Thank you for your time and coming in for an interview. I appreciated speaking with you.

Firstly, I hope you are not a woman who is easily offended (item 1: Women are too easily

offended), *innocent remarks can easily be interpreted as sexist these days* (item 3: Most women interpret innocent remarks as sexist). *That said I have chosen a different candidate for this position, someone I feel is a better fit given in the past I have found women often exaggerate the problems they face in organizations simply to get power and control over men such as myself* (combination of items 1, 2, and 3) *and have unreasonable expectations from upper management* (item 5: Feminists are making reasonable demands). *I hope you can see that this was a fair competition between yourself and the other candidate* (item 4: When women lose fairly, they claim discrimination). *And I am confident you will continue to appreciate all that Mr. Jones has done for you as you continue to work under him* (item 10: Women fail to appreciate all men do for them.)

I hope you understand my decision.

Sincerely,

Mr. Williams

Benevolent Sexism Condition

Hello,

Thank you for your time and coming in for an interview. As a gentleman, I feel it is my duty to look out for your best interests (item 13: Men should sacrifice to provide for women) *and while I appreciated speaking with you I have chosen a different candidate for this position because I feel you are better suited for your current position assisting Mr. Jones. He has reminded me of his preference to work with women* (item 19: Men are complete without women—reverse coded), *such as yourself, because they are more sensitive and have better taste* (item 12: Women should be cherished and protected by men, item 11: A good woman should be set on a pedestal, item 17: Women have a more refined sense of culture and taste). *Indeed, we all think that the presence of*

women, who are more cultured and well-groomed than men, allows the organization to benefit from their morality, whereas these aspects usually lack in environments where only men work. I feel despite his many accomplishments, his position would be incomplete without a woman such as yourself (item 20: Despite accomplishment, men are incomplete without women). Therefore, I hope you understand my decision.

Sincerely,

Mr. Williams

Control Condition

Hello,

Thank you for your time and coming in for an interview. I appreciated speaking with you. I have chosen a different candidate for this position. I am confident you will continue to move forward in your current position and consider applying again when the opportunity arises. I hope you understand my decision.

Sincerely,

Mr. Williams

APPENDIX B

Causal Dimension Scale (Russell, 1982)

Think about the cause(s) or reason(s) you did not receive the promotion. Please list the cause(s) or reason(s) below: _____

Think about the cause(s) or reason(s) you listed above. The items below concern your impressions and opinions of this cause or causes of your outcome. Circle one number for each of the following scales.

1. Is the reason(s) you did not receive a promotion something that:

Reflects an aspect of yourself 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 *Reflects an aspect of the situation*

2. Is the reason(s) you did not receive a promotion:

Controllable by you or other people 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 *Uncontrollable by you or other people*

3. Is the reason(s) you did not receive a promotion something that is:

Permanent 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 *Temporary*

4. Is the reason(s) you did not receive a promotion something:

Intended by you or other people 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 *Unintended by you or other people*

5. Is the reason(s) you did not receive a promotion something that is:

Outside of you 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 *Inside of you*

6. Is the reason(s) you did not receive a promotion something that is:

Variable over time 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 *Stable over time*

7. Is the reason(s) you did not receive a promotion:

Something about you 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 *Something about others*

8. Is the reason(s) you did not receive a promotion something that is:

Changeable 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 *Unchanging*

9. Is the reason(s) you did not receive a promotion something for which:

No one is responsible 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 *Someone is responsible*

APPENDIX C

Feminist Identity Composite Scale (Fischer, 2000)

Below are a list of statements concerning attitudes toward men and women and their relationships in contemporary society. Please rate how much you agree with each statement using the scale below.

1-strongly disagree

2- disagree

3- neutral

4- agree

5-strongly agree

1. I don't see much point in questioning the general expectation that men should be masculine and women should be feminine (PA)
2. One thing I especially like about being a woman is that men will offer me their seat on a crowded bus or open door for me because I am a woman. (PA)
3. I like being a traditional female (PA)
4. I think that men and women had it better in the 1950's when married women were housewives and their husbands supported them. (PA)
5. If I were married to a man and my husband was offered a job in another state, it would be my obligation to move in support of his career. (PA)
6. I think that most women will feel most fulfilled by being a wife and a mother. (PA)
7. I think its lucky that women aren't expected to do some of the more dangerous jobs that men are expected to do, like construction work or race car driving. (PA)
8. I do not want to have equal status with men (PA)

9. Gradually, I am beginning to see just how sexist society really is. (REV)
10. I feel angry when I think about the way I am treated by men and boys (RV)
11. Men receive many advantages in society and because of this are against equality for women (REV)
12. I never realized until recently that I have experienced oppression and discrimination as a woman in society (REV)
13. I feel like I've been duped into believing society's perceptions of me as a woman (REV)
14. My female friends are like me in that we are all angry at men and the ways we have been treated as women. (REV)
15. In my interactions with men, I am always looking for ways I may be discriminated against because I am female (REV)
16. Regretfully, I can see ways in which I have perpetuated sexist attitudes in the past. (REV)
17. If I were to paint a picture or write a poem, it would probably be about women or women's issues (EE)
18. I am very interested in women writes (EE)
19. I am very interested in women musicians (EE)
20. I am very interested in women artists (EE)
21. I am very interested in women's studies (EE)
22. I share most of my social time with a few close women friends who share my feminist values (EE)
23. I just feel like I need to be around women who share my point of view right now (EE)
24. I choose my "causes" carefully to work for greater equality of all people (SYN)

25. I owe it not only to women but to all people to work for greater opportunity and equality for all (SYN)
26. I feel like I have blended my female attributes with my unique personal qualities (SYN)
27. I am proud to be a competent woman (SYN)
28. I have incorporated what is female and feminine into my own unique personality (SYN)
29. I enjoy the pride and self-assurance that comes from being a strong female (SYN)
30. As I have grown in my beliefs I have realized that it is more important to value women as individuals than as members of a large group of women (SYN)
31. I evaluate men as individuals, not as members of a group of oppressors (SYN)
32. I feel that some men are sensitive to women's issues (SYN)
33. I am very committed to a cause that I believe contributes to a more fair and just world for all people. (AC)
34. I want to work to improve women's status. (AC)
35. I am willing to make certain sacrifices to effect change in this society in order to create a nonsexist, peaceful place where all people have equal opportunities. (AC)
36. It is very satisfying to me to be able to use my talents and skills in my work in the women's movement. (AC)
37. I care very deeply about men and women having equal opportunities in all respects. (AC)
38. I feel that I am very powerful and effective spokesperson for the women's issues I am concerned with right now (AC)
39. On some level, my motivation for almost every activity I engage in is my desire for an egalitarian world (AC)

APPENDIX D

Meritocracy Ideology Composite Scale (Major, Kaiser, O'Brien, & McCoy, 2007)

The following is a list of statements concerning personal worldviews. Please answer how much you agree with each statement using the scale below.

- 0- Strongly Disagree
- 1- Disagree
- 2- Slightly Disagree
- 3- Neutral
- 4- Slightly Agree
- 5- Agree
- 6- Strongly Agree

IMB subscale items

1. America is an open society where all individuals can achieve higher status
2. Advancement in American society is possible for all individuals
3. Individual members of certain groups are often unable to advance in American Society
(reversed)
4. Individual members of certain groups have difficulty achieving higher status (reversed).

PWE subscale items

1. Most people who don't get ahead should not blame the system; they really only have themselves to blame
2. If people work hard they almost always get what they want
3. Even if people work hard, they don't always get ahead (reversed)
4. In America, getting ahead doesn't always depend on hard work (reversed).

APPENDIX E

Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick & Fiske, 1996)

Relationships Between Men and Women

Below are a series of statements concerning men and women and their relationship in contemporary society. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement using the scale below:

- 0- Strongly Disagree
- 1- Disagree
- 2- Slightly Disagree
- 3- Slightly Agree
- 4- Agree
- 5- Strongly Agree

Hostile Sexism

1. Women exaggerate problems at work
2. Women are too easily offended
3. Most women interpret innocent remarks as sexist
4. When women lose fairly, they claim discrimination
5. Feminists are making reasonable demands (Reverse)
6. Feminists are not seeking more power than men (Reverse)
7. Women seek power by gaining control over men
8. Few women tease men sexually (Reverse)
9. Once a man commits, she puts him on a tight lease
10. Women fail to appreciate all men do for them

Benevolent Sexism

11. A good woman should be set on a pedestal (PP)
12. Women should be cherished and protected by men (PP)
13. Men should sacrifice to provide for women (PP)
14. In a disaster, women need not be rescued first (PP)
15. Women have a superior moral sensibility (CGD)
16. Women have a quality of purity few men possess (CGD)
17. Women have a more refined sense of culture and taste
18. Every man ought to have a woman he adores (HI)
19. Men are complete without women (HI reverse)
20. Despite accomplishment, men are incomplete without women (HI)
21. People are often happy without heterosexual romance (HI reverse)

APPENDIX F

Post-hoc Analyses

Table 17

Summary of Bivariate Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations for Scores on Causality, Uncontrollability, Stability, and Feminist Identity Development Composite Scale Subscales for the Hostile Sexism Condition N= 104

| Variable | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|----------|----------|-----------|---------|---------|----|
| 1. PA | 2.23 | 0.86 | -- | | |
| 2. AC | 3.93 | 0.73 | -0.34** | -- | |
| 3. MB | 2.06 | 1.12 | 0.34** | -0.39** | -- |

Note. ** indicates $p < .01$. *M* and *SD* are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively. PA= Passive Acceptance; AC= Active Commitment; MB= Overall Meritocracy Beliefs. Bootstrapping based on 1000 bootstrapping samples.

Table 18

Summary of Bivariate Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations for Scores on Causality, Uncontrollability, Stability, and Feminist Identity Development Composite Scale Subscales for the Benevolent Sexism Condition N = 103

| Variable | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|----------|----------|-----------|---------|---------|----|
| 1. PA | 2.24 | 0.93 | -- | | |
| 2. AC | 3.91 | 0.68 | -0.38** | -- | |
| 3. MB | 2.06 | 1.12 | 0.51** | -0.37** | -- |

Note. ** indicates $p < .01$. *M* and *SD* are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively. PA = Passive Acceptance; AC = Active Commitment; MB = Overall Meritocracy Beliefs. Bootstrapping based on 1000 bootstrapping samples.

Table 19

Summary of Bivariate Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations for Scores on Causality, Uncontrollability, Stability, and Feminist Identity Development Composite Scale Subscales for the No Sexism Control Condition N = 98

| Variable | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|----------|----------|-----------|---------|---------|----|
| 1. PA | 2.31 | 0.91 | -- | | |
| 2. AC | 3.75 | 0.80 | -0.46** | -- | |
| 3. MB | 2.18 | 1.44 | 0.52** | -0.32** | -- |

Note. ** indicates $p < .01$. *M* and *SD* are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively. PA = Passive Acceptance; AC = Active Commitment; MB = Overall Meritocracy Beliefs. Bootstrapping based on 1000 bootstrapping samples.