*Chapter 7*

# Sexism
## Sexist Prejudice, Stereotyping, and Discrimination

A boy and his father were in a major car accident. The father was pronounced dead at the scene; meanwhile, the boy was rushed to the nearest hospital. A prominent surgeon was called to perform a life-saving operation. As the boy was being prepared for the surgery, the surgeon saw him and declared: "I can't operate. He's my son." How can this be?

This brain-teaser was widely circulated in the 1970s and baffled many people. Some suggested that the surgeon was a stepfather, an unknown biological father (as opposed to the adoptive father who died in the crash), a reincarnation of the dead father, mistaken about the identity of the boy, and so on. A simple solution eluded many.[1] Yet this simple riddle speaks volumes about how deep-seated sexism can be; we are likely to consider all sorts of outlandish possibilities before we challenge the misleading assumption that the surgeon is male.

In the previous chapter, we explored how gender stereotyping can shape different social contexts for women and men yet make it appear that women and men themselves are essentially different. In this chapter, we'll look at how gender stereotyping moves from being simply descriptive of women and men to proscribing what women and men do, ultimately limiting and oppressing women and girls.[2] In other words, I'll make the case that gender stereotyping can become sexist stereotyping. We'll also see how sexist stereotyping fits within a broader system of sexism that encompasses sexist prejudice, sexist stereotyping, and sexist discrimination.

# GENDER STEREOTYPES

We've been talking a lot about gender **stereotyping**, but we haven't yet looked at the content of those stereotypes. Take a few moments and:

> Describe the *typical women*, as viewed by society.
> Describe the *ideal woman*, as viewed by society.

Notice that I'm not really interested in your own views, but rather your perceptions of our general cultural understandings (social norms).

## The Contents of Gender Stereotypes

**Social norms** tell us about how people should behave, in this case defining what is appropriate for girls/women and boys/men. Notice that there are two kinds of social norms: **descriptive norms** (which describe what we perceive to be typical) and **prescriptive or injunctive norms** (which dictate what ought to be ideally) (Eagly & Karau, 2002). These norms are not always the same. For example, the typical American mother is employed, yet the cultural ideal demands that "good" mothers not work outside the home. Overall, the contents of gender stereotypes encompass traits, role behaviors, occupations, and physical characteristics (Deaux & Lewis, 1984).

**Stereotyped traits.**   Researchers have explored the contents of trait stereotypes about women by asking participants to think about the "typical female student" (Spence & Buckner, 2000), to rate "how desirable it is in American society for a woman to possess" listed

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[1]The surgeon is the boy's mom.

[2]I do not mean to dismiss prejudice directed against men as inconsequential (see Chapter 1); however, women will take center stage in the present discussion of sexism.

traits (Prentice & Carranza, 2002), to list "things that people in general assume to be true of people the same gender as you" (Oswald & Lindstedt, 2006), and to pick traits from a list that best describe different subgroups of women (Wade & Brewer, 2006). These studies converge on the trait clusters for self-reported gender identity we reviewed in Chapter 6 using the Bem Sex Role Inventory and Personal Attributes Questionnaire (see Table 6.3). The traits stereo-typically associated with women and femininity describe a more nurturing, caring, expressive, or **communal** orientation—overall conveying **warmth**. When focusing on men with parallel questions, the traits for men and masculinity draw on a more independent, separate, instrumental, or **agentic** orientation—overall conveying **competence** (Conway et al., 1996).

This linkage of communion/warmth with women and agency/competence with men is quite well ingrained in our thinking. Looking at self-construals, women define themselves as higher in relational interdependence (communion) than men; men, as higher in independence/agency (Guimond et al., 2006). These differences even show up in how women and men are described in letters of recommendation for academic jobs (Madera et al., 2009).

This association of women with communion is so pervasive that when students were first instructed to think about women and then did a modified **Stroop task** in which they had to name the color of words printed in different colors and all referring to sociability, they took longer than with ability words (White & Gardner, 2009). This difference in response time is because participants were distracted by the content of the words that fit women (sociability) and not by words that didn't fit (ability). In other words, there was more interference of word content with the sociability words so that students primed to think about women could less effectively concentrate on the task of identifying each printed word's color.

Stereotypes evoking femininity and masculinity can overpower the sex of the target (Helgeson, 1994a). The "feminine male" is described as more warm than competent; the "masculine female," as more competent than warm. Furthermore, gender stereotypes seem to span cultures (Williams & Best, 1990), all of which are fundamentally patriarchal—but not necessarily historical time periods. College students' perceptions of stereotypes about women are highly dynamic, arguing that contemporary women are more masculine than women of the past, whereas men are regarded as largely unchanged (Diekman & Eagly, 2000).

**Stereotyped role behaviors.**  At least five subcategories of gender stereotypes emerge for women: homemaker, sexy woman, athlete/lesbian, businesswoman, and feminist (Deaux et al., 1985; Wade & Brewer, 2006).[3] The *homemaker* stereotype is characterized as a caregiver who is caring, devoted, loving, and nurturing and who spends time with her family. The subtype of *sexy woman* conjures up a well-dressed woman with a good figure, pretty face, long hair, and nail polish. The third subcategory describes *athletes* who are aggressive, competitive, determined, devoted, driven, energetic, hard-working, healthy, motivated, strong, and talented. The *businesswoman* is aggressive, ambitious, assertive, classy, competitive, confident, driven, hardworking, independent, intelligent, motivated, and professional. A feminist stereotypically is judged to be an aggressive, defensive, political, and opinionated extremist and activist. These five sub-categories can be distilled further into two general categories of stereotyping of women:

[3]The descriptions used here for all but the sexy woman were generated by college women and men asked to pick traits for these and seven other subgroups of women listed by the researchers (Wade & Brewer, 2006).

*traditional* (housewife mother and sexy woman[4]), conveying **warmth**, and *nontraditional* (athlete/lesbian, businesswoman, and feminist), conveying **competence** (Glick & Fiske 1997; 1999a; Wade & Brewer, 2006).

Role stereotypes are dependent on **social contexts**. The four role-based stereotypes for women all depend on the social context in which they are evoked. For example, in a business setting, it is unlikely that, upon seeing a woman at a desk with a computer terminal, the housewife/mother stereotype will be activated. We generally look for a good situation-role fit to determine which subtype of role stereotyping to use (Eckes, 1996), making "businesswoman" a better fit in this work context.

In her social role theory, Alice Eagly (1987) sees role stereotypes as the core reason for many gender differences that have been documented by researchers (also see Eagly, Wood, & Diekman, 2000). Because cultures dictate expectations about the role assignments for women (homemaker) and for men (breadwinner), women and men are oftentimes motivated to pursue different goals (Diekman & Eagly, 2008), are expected to exhibit different traits (Diekman & Goodfriend, 2006), hold different political attitudes (Diekman & Schneider, 2010), and envision different near and distant possible selves (Brown & Diekman, 2010).

These authors also project that what is valued in women and men will shift as roles change over time, thus putting changes in women's and men's roles at the heart of social change. For example, in a clever study (Diekman & Goodfriend, 2006), students were presented with one of two hypothetical societies in which the government proactively decided to focus more on caregiving roles (or business competition). Students then rated communal and agentic qualities for how useful and positive they were for individuals. Although agency was generally regarded as useful, communion was rated as more useful and as more positive in the caregiving context; agency, in the competitive context. Thus with a cultural shift in roles came an evaluative shift in values.

**Stereotyped occupations.**    The stereotyping of occupations as appropriate or inappropriate for women or men is intimately tied to actual gender ratios within an occupation. Joyce Beggs and Dorothy Doolittle (1993) created a continuum of people's perceptions of 129 jobs that ran from masculine on one end (anchored by miner) to feminine on the other (manicurist). These perceptions mapped well onto the actual gender ratios of employees in each position. These ratings also were responsive to changing ratios over time. Ratings of the 56 jobs on their list that increased their proportions of women from 1975 to the 1990s became similarly less masculine over time. Despite some movement though, all but 5 of the 129 jobs studied retained their general classification as masculine, feminine, or neutral across the time span of the study,[5] and women ratings in the 1990s were less gender-typed than men's.

## *The Myth of the Generic Woman*

I started this section by asking you to describe society's view of typical and ideal women. Who are these women? Try picturing them. Would your picture change if I added some

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[4]Although the stereotypes of both housewives and sexy women are similar in their non-threatening warmth, housewives are perceived as high in sexual and moral virtue; sexy women, low (Altermatt et al., 2003).

[5]The 5 exceptions were: sales manager, which moved from masculine to neutral; taxidermist, which shifted from neutral to masculine; and social worker, florist supply sales, and file clerk, which went from neutral to feminine.

qualifications, like picturing the typical African American woman? Elderly woman? Heterosexual woman? For example, who did White American college students rate as loud, religious, talkative, tough, strong, and loyal to family ties? … as emotional, intelligent, sensitive, educated, family-oriented, and independent? The "typical" Black and White woman, respectively—with no overlap between the dominant traits listed for these two subgroups of women (Donovan, 2011).

Although we might think we can describe women in general, researchers find that this presumably generic version overlaps substantially with some subgroup characterizations and not with others (Irmen, 2006). Not surprisingly, the *unqualified* stereotyping of typical and ideal women parallels the stereotypes for culturally normative (hence privileged) subgroups: White, middle and upper class, heterosexual, younger, physically able, Christian—just take a spin around the Diversity Wheel (Landrine, 1985). The greatest overlap of role stereotypes for "woman" without a qualifier is mother (Eckes, 1994), suggesting that motherhood is the normatively defining feature of womanhood. Additionally, we shouldn't be surprised to find that the more privileged the group, the more positive the content of their stereotyping (Glick, 1997).

Qualifying stereotypes away from the normative moves the content of these stereotypes in a negative direction. For example, consider the most normative role for women: mother. Specifying "African American mothers" brings in conflicting images of mammies, welfare, promiscuity, matriarchy, and superwomen (Sparks, 1996). Think about "lesbian mothers," "unmarried mothers," "stepmothers," "divorced mothers," and "never married mothers" (Burns, 2000; Ganong & Coleman, 1995; Hequembourg & Farrell, 1999). Stepmothers are depicted as less family oriented, uninterested and unskilled in raising children, and less successful in their marriages. Divorced mothers are characterized as lonely, unhappy, stressed, financially poor, and with bleak futures. Never married mothers are portrayed as unpleasant people who are deficient in their childrearing skills, failures as marital partners, and products of dysfunctional families. Overall, the mother stereotype is rosy only if the mom is married, heterosexual, and biologically related to her child(ren).

Before we move to the next section, please go to Box 7.1 and complete the ratings there. Doing this brief exercise will help make the following more concrete.

# SEXIST STEREOTYPING

We have seen that both trait and role stereotypes involve two primary dimensions: **warmth** (including the communal expressiveness of feminine traits, the traditional role of homemaker, and female-dominated occupations) and **competence** (including the agentic expressiveness of masculine traits, the roles of athlete and businesswomen, and male-dominated occupations). As simple descriptions, these appear benign, but remember that stereotyping includes prescriptive norms about what women and men *ought* to do. When we culturally dictate rules for what people should do, we open the door to deviations and the costs that go with deviating. As we have seen throughout this text, we slip from simply describing differences to making judgments about deficiency, to disrupting contact, and to losing connection.

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Box 7.1

When completing the items below, please note that I am NOT interested in your personal beliefs, but in how you think each group is viewed by others. Read down each column, starting to the left.

As viewed by society, how competent are home-makers?

    1      2      3      4      5

not at all          very

ompetent         competent

As viewed by society, how warm are homemakers?

    1      2      3      4      5

not at all          very

warm          warm

How economically successful have homemakers been?

    1      2      3      4      5

not at all          very

successful        successful

Resources that go to homemakers are likely to take away from the resources of people like me.

    1      2      3      4      5

not at all          very

true          true

As viewed by society, how competent are business-women?

    1      2      3      4      5

not at all          very

competent        competent

As viewed by society, how warm are business-women?

    1      2      3      4      5

not at all          very

warm          warm

How economically successful have business-women been?

    1      2      3      4      5

not at all          very

successful        successful

Resources that go to businesswomen are likely to take away from the resources of people like me.

    1      2      3      4      5

not at all          very

true          true

As viewed by society, how competent are welfare recipients?

    1      2      3      4      5

not at all          very

competent        competent

As viewed by society, how warm are welfare recipients?

    1      2      3      4      5

not at all          very

warm          warm

How economically successful have welfare recipients been?

    1      2      3      4      5

not at all          very

successful        successful

Resources that go to welfare recipients are likely to take away from the resources of people like me.

    1      2      3      4      5

not at all          very

true          true

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## From Stereotypes to Stereotyping

To make this leap from the simple gendered contents of stereotypes to calling stereotyping sexist, we need first to define what we mean by sexism. **Sexism** directed against women is the oppression or "inhibition" of women "through a vast network of everyday practices, attitudes, assumptions, behaviors, and institutional rules" (Young, 1992, p. 180). If we look at sexism through the eyes of a social psychologist, we see that it has three interrelated, but conceptually distinct, parts: stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination (Lott, 1995). **Sexist stereotyping** refers to the ascription of both positive and negative traits that characterize women and girls as well suited to restricted, less powerful and/or disliked roles. **Sexist prejudice** refers to negative as well as apparently positive attitudes toward women and girls that serve to oppress them. **Sexist discrimination** describes overt negative acts directed toward

women and girls, as well as patronizing acts that assert male superiority. We'll examine each of these forms of sexism in this chapter, focusing our discussion first on stereotyping.

Please notice how my language has shifted from talking about gender stereotypes to considering gender *stereotyping*. As we have seen, the contents of stereotypes are dynamic—changing somewhat over time in response to changes in roles, especially women's (Diekman & Eagly, 2000). However, *stereotyping* is a fundamental process that continues to shape our thinking even if the contents of stereotypes change (Fiske et al., 2002). Most important, this shift away from content toward process lets us look more deeply across all stereotyping to find the common ground that unites stereotypes. This broadened perspective helps us avoid getting bogged down by all the qualifications we have seen can change even the fundamental tone of stereotyping (e.g., from the generally positive tone of stereotyping about "mothers" to the negativity associated with "lesbian mothers").

## *The Evaluative Meaning of Stereotyping*

So far we have distilled all that we know about gender stereotyping down to two dimensions: warmth and competence. Certainly both are positively valued dimensions, and we all would be flattered to have others regard us as *both* warm (likeable) and competent (respected). Using questions like those in Box 7.1, Susan Fiske and her colleagues (2002) asked student and nonstudent samples about all kinds of stereotyped groups. The cluster that scored high on both warmth and competence included Christians, middle-class people, students, Whites, and *women*; that is, mostly culturally dominant groups in the United States. The surprisingly finding is the listing of "women" instead of "men," yet this findings fits with the general favorability of ratings of trait attributions for women (Eagly & Mladinic, 1989).

Based on what we learned above, we already know what's wrong with this simple finding—it assumes a generic woman. There are all kinds of ways we could specify the woman we are talking about, but again turning to what we just learned, it makes sense to consider the major role categories. This is what Fiske and her colleagues did in their Stereotype Content Model, collecting ratings for housewives, sexy women, businesswomen, and feminists. Where these groups fell along the dimensions of warmth and competence, as well as

|  | **WARMTH** | |
|---|---|---|
|  | low | high |
| **COMPETENCE** low | poor whites, poor blacks, Hispanics, welfare recipients, homeless people | housewives, sexy women, elderly people, people with disabilities, "retarded," "blind" |
| **COMPETENCE** high | businesswomen, men, feminists, Asians, Jews, black professionals, rich, educated, Northerners | In-groups: women (generic) whites, middle-class |

TABLE 7.2
Susan Fiske and her colleagues (2002) found that clusters of groups were similarly stereotyped along two dimensions of warmth and competence.

other groups that clustered with each, can be seen in Table 7.2. (You may want to review your answers in Box 7.1 here to see how they fit into Table 7.2.)

## Warmth or Competence

Examining the clusters in Table 7.2, another pattern emerges (Fiske et al., 2002). House-wives, like others in their warm-but-incompetent cluster, are not competitive threats to rat-ers. They aren't expected to make life difficult for raters if they get preferential treatment; their power doesn't lessen raters' perceived power; and the resources they get don't take away from raters' resources.

Businesswomen, like others in their competent-but-cold category, are regarded as high status. They are evaluated by raters as holding prestigious jobs, being well educated, and proving themselves economically successful. To finish out the matrix resulting from cross-ing warmth with competence, the groups rated as low on both competence and warmth (e.g., the poor and welfare recipients) are regarded as both non-threatening and subordi-nated in status. In sum, *high warmth is predicted by being non-competitive (non-threaten-ing), and high competence results from privileged status.*

The last point digs deeper to better understand warmth and competence as more than simple descriptions; rather, warmth and competence ultimately are related to non-compet-itiveness and high status; that is, power (Conway & Vartanian, 2000). Stereotypes about warmth tell us about people's intent, and stereotypes about competence, about people's capabilities to pursue their intentions. People become limited by their traits and in their roles to the extent that they are seen as holding non-threatening intentions and/or power-ful capabilities. In Table 7.2, these groups include those high in warmth and low in com-petence, high in competence and low in warmth, and low on both (i.e., everyone but the culturally dominant groups).

Most, if not all, subtypes of women fall into one of the two mixed cells where groups are stereotyped as high on either warmth *or* competence and low on the other (Eckes, 2002; Fiske et al., 1999, 2002). In other words, all women (except mythical generic women) are either liked *or* respected, but not both liked *and* respected (Goodwin & Fiske, 2001). Given our definition of **sexist stereotyping** as limiting the targets of stereotyping to restricted, less powerful and/or disliked roles, gender stereotypes succumb to sexist stereotyping to the extent that they limit girls and women to choosing between being liked and being respected.

This juggling of warmth *or* competence is made visible in a fascinating naturalistic experiment conducted by Michelle Hebl and her colleagues (2007). Female **confederates** wearing, or not wearing, a pregnancy prosthesis visited retail stores as either customers or job applicants. When apparently pregnant women stayed within a traditional role (cus-tomer), they were treated with over-friendliness by store employees relative to non-preg-nant women (as we'd expect, given their assumed warmth as mothers-to-be). However, when these seemingly pregnant women turned up as job applicants (who were subtly trying to be both warm—pregnant—and competent—suitable for a job), they were treated with greater rudeness than the non-pregnant controls. In a follow-up study, pregnant women applying for more masculine-typed (likely associated with competence) as compared to feminine-typed (warmth) jobs were treated with more hostility. Across these two studies, friendly and hostile reactions were likely inadvertently used by store employees to keep women "in their place."

This tradeoff between warmth *or* competence for women is also evident in stereotyping about women who try to combine warmth (mothers) with competence (employment). Amy Cuddy and her associates (2004) explored college students' ratings of the stereotyping oxymoron of the "professional mother." When professionally employed women took on the added role of mother, they traded perceived competence for perceived warmth. In contrast, professional men who became fathers gained in warmth yet managed to maintain their perceived competence. Professional mothers not only took a hit in how competent they were regarded, but these declines in competence predicted less interest in hiring, promoting, and educating them. Working mothers' gains in warmth did nothing to help, and instead hurt, them in the workplace.

In sum, we have seen that stereotyping is a process that does more than describe women as warm or competent, but rather actively works to restrict real women to choosing between warmth by being noncompetitive *or* competence by emphasizing status. We can see this process in the no-win examples of women who limit their own opportunities (such as being a contestant on the TV show "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire") because they fear competition where not only does "losing" threaten competence, but "winning" loses warmth (Larkin & Pines, 2003). This linkage of the content of stereotypes to issues of privilege, oppression, and power works to maintain a status quo system of inequality (Glick & Fiske, 2001a). We'll see that this system is maintained through our attitudes of sexist prejudice and that the consequences of this sexist stereotyping are seen in examples of sexist discrimination.

# SEXIST PREJUDICE

"Swearing and obscenity are more repulsive in the speech of a woman than a man."

Asking people whether they agree or disagree with statements like the one above (taken from the Attitudes Toward Women Scale; Spence & Helmreich, 1972) used to be all it took to measure individuals' sexist beliefs. Over time, however, respondents, especially from well-educated student samples, stopped varying on items like this one and instead openly and pretty universally expressed egalitarian answers (Spence & Hahn, 1997). Does this change mean that sexist prejudice has disappeared? Read on ….

## *Explicit and Implicit Attitudes*

Recognizing that prejudices in general have become increasingly subtle (but as we'll see, continually powerful), social psychologists distinguish between **explicit attitude**s, measured on self-report scales, and **implicit attitudes,** about which we may be largely unaware (Dovidio et al., 2001). To tap into these implicit attitudes, cognitive psychologists developed the now-popular, computerized **Implicit Associations Test** (IAT; Greenwald et al., 1998). The logic of this test rests on the idea that it will take people longer to process unassociated pairings (flowers and unpleasant) than associated pairings (insects and unpleasant). Using a series of timed tests, experimenters present words or pictures to participants and ask them to make quick judgments. When associated pairs share the same response key on the computer's keyboard, participants can make these judgments more quickly

(lower response time) than when they are unassociated. Thus, researchers can explore all kinds of associations involving much more charged pairings (fat/bad) than those involving prejudices toward bugs and preferences for flowers. You might want to Google "implicit associations tests" (or go to *https:/implicit.harvard.edu/implicit*) to participate in an IAT so that you get a feel for how these tests work.

For example, Kelly Malcolmson and Lisa Sinclair (2007) explored college students' explicit and implicit attitudes toward the titles Ms., Miss, Mrs., and Mr. Specifically, they asked students to rate a target person described with one of these titles on communal and agentic traits. On the explicit survey, women addressed as Ms. were judged as less communal than Mrs. and Mr. (but similar to Miss) and as more agentic than all three other targets. Using an IAT, reactions to Ms. (compared to Mrs.) were more agentic than communal, and no implicit differences were found between Ms. and Miss. Given that the title Ms. is associated with being feminist, both types of studies converge on the stereotyping of feminists as competent/agentic but not warm/communal, consistent with what the Stereotype Content Model would predict. Thinking about these findings on a day-to-day level, it is interesting that something as simple as a title of address should force women, but not Mr.-only men, to have to juggle the warmth-or-competence impression they wish to convey (Ms.: competent; Mrs.: warm; Miss: unclear).

You may think that because we cannot easily control our implicit attitudes that they are more "real" measures of our attitudes than traditional self-report measures of explicit attitudes. However, a growing body of research with both types of measures finds that each has its place in helping us understand prejudices (for example, see Petty et al., 2008), especially if self-report measures are less transparent than the item about swearing with which we started this section. At least three more contemporary self-report measures of sexist beliefs have been developed to usefully tap into **explicit attitudes** about women (and men).

Two of these measures capture "hidden" or unacknowledged prejudices against women: the *Modern Sexism Scale* (MS; Swim et al., 1995) and the *Neosexism Scale* (NS; Tougas et al., 1995). Both measure beliefs that discount sexist incidents, contending that such incidents are rare ("Over the past few years, the government and news media have been showing more concern about the treatment of women than is warranted by women's actual experiences"—MS), exhibiting antagonism toward women's demands, and expressing resentment toward efforts to reduce gender equality ("Due to social pressures, firms frequently have to hire underqualified women"—NS). Given that these two measures have to do with being unaware of sexism, making sexist incidents visible to women (by asking them to keep a diary of sexist "daily hassles") can change these beliefs (Becker & Swim, 2011). Interestingly, for men's beliefs to change, men need to both be aware of such incidents and have empathy for the women who are victimized by them. The third measure is the *Ambivalent Sexism Inventory* (ASI; Glick & Fiske, 1996; updated in 2001b), but to fully understand this increasingly used scale, we first need to step back and explore our general ideas about prejudices.

## *Ambivalent Sexism*

We generally think of prejudices as negative, and indeed there are forms of prejudice that are openly and consistently hostile. For example, consider the welfare recipients you rated in Box 7.1. Generally they are regarded with contempt, disgust, anger, and resentment (Fiske
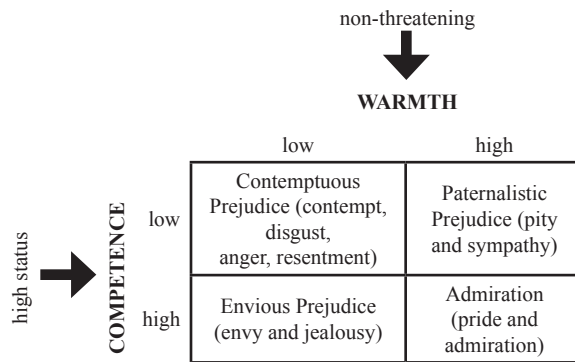
Table 7.3
Raters evidence different types of emotional prejudice for out-groups, but show consistency within clusters (cells). High warmth results from being non-competitive; high competence, from high status (Fiske at al., 2002).

non-threatening

**WARMTH**

|  | low | high |
|---|---|---|
| **low** | Contemptuous Prejudice (contempt, disgust, anger, resentment) | Paternalistic Prejudice (pity and sympathy) |
| **high** | Envious Prejudice (envy and jealousy) | Admiration (pride and admiration) |

high status → **COMPETENCE**

et al., 2002). Indeed, Susan Fiske and her associates find that all groups in the low warmth, low competence quadrant face the same emotional reaction of contemptuous prejudice from others (see Table 7.3). The other three cells of Table 7.3 reveal common emotional prejudices across the groups clustered within them, including favorable reactions of admiration for those culturally dominant members who are regarded as both warm and competent.

However, we have seen that real women generally, if not always, fall into the mixed cells where either warmth *or* competence are high, incurring either paternalistic prejudice with high warmth/low competence or envious prejudice with high competence/low warmth. **Paternalistic prejudice** is characterized by pity and sympathy for those people (e.g., housewives, the elderly) (Cuddy et al., 2005) perceived as unable to control their own outcomes and in need of being cared for, despite their best (non-threatening) intentions. **Envious prejudice** lends grudging admiration to those with high status (e.g., feminists and Black professionals), but this admiration comes with envy and jealousy because the perceiver is threatened by these groups' status.

Neither combination is completely positive nor completely negative, but rather there is a mix of both seemingly positive and negative emotions (captured in the notion of **ambivalence**). Indeed, this ambivalence shows itself in sexist prejudice, which can evoke negative images as well as arguably benign or even revered ones (Glick & Fiske, 1996).

These contrasting attitudes are captured in the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory with its two subscales measuring "**hostile**" (HS) and "**benevolent**" (BS) sexism *targeting women*.[6] To get a sense of these two forms of sexism, especially BS, which is harder to think about and more complex than HS, be sure to check out Box 7.4. The items that compose the hostile subscale conform to what we usually think of when we consider prejudice toward women—the items clearly demean women, especially nontraditional women. As we'll see, the BS items, in contrast, are more prescriptive about what "good" (traditional) women should be like.

As you might suspect, among both students and non-students, American men scored higher than women on both hostile and benevolent sexism, with the difference being greater for HS than BS (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Interestingly though, the structure of these

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[6]There is an Ambivalence toward Men Inventory (Glick & Fiske, 1999b), although it has attracted far less attention than the ASI.

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Box 7.4
Sample Items from the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI) and from Students' Essays

**Hostile Sexism**
*Most women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist.*
*Most women fail to appreciate fully all that men do for them.*
*Women seek to gain power by getting control over men.*

**Benevolent Sexism**
**Protective Paternalism:** Women should depend on men for protection and should support men
*A good woman should be set on a pedestal by her man.*
*Men should be willing to sacrifice their own well-being in order to provide financially for the women in their lives.*
"She sees the husband as the provider and her job is to care for him."

**Complementary Gender Differentiation:** Women and men are different—gender polarization—and these roles complement each other.
*Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess.*
"Women are more caring in general and I believe that they instinctively know they are to love and care for their children, perhaps more so than men."

**Heterosexual Intimacy:** Fulfillment depends on being heterosexually intimate.
*People are not truly happy in life without being romantically involved with a member of the other sex.*
*No matter how accomplished he is, a man is not truly complete as a person unless he has the love of a woman.*
"Being a woman also means that you have to get married … [whereas] a man can be single until the day that he dies, and he's still considered a bachelor, not an 'old maid.'"

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*Note*. Each *italicized* ASI item is rated on a 6-point scale ranging from 0 (*disagree strongly*) to 5 (*agree strongly*). Note that there are three different forms of BS. The statements in quotes come from students asked to write an essay about "What does it mean to be a woman?" Fields and her colleagues (2010) content analyzed these essays, finding examples of ambivalent sexism in 99% of them. These quotes are included here to help you get a richer grasp of what Benevolent Sexism is.

*Sources*: P. Glick and S. T. Fiske (2001b). An ambivalent alliance: Hostile and benevolent sexism as complementary justifications for gender inequality. *American Psychologist, 56*, 109–118. ASI items printed with permission of Peter Glick. Fields, A. M., Swan, S., & Kloos, B. (2010). What it means to be a woman: Ambivalent sexism in female college students' experiences and attitudes. *Sex Roles, 62*, 554–567.

scales was parallel for women and men, arguing that sexism is alive and well among *both* sexes. Additionally, although HS and BS were correlated (so that individuals who scored high on one tended to score high on the other), we'll see that these subscales function differently—as we might expect if they represent two related but distinguishable forms of sexism. A quick search of PsycINFO turned up 155 journal articles listing "ambivalent" or "benevolent" with "sexism" in their Abstract since this measure was published in 1996. Tiane Lee, Susan Fiske, and Peter Glick (2010a) penned a summary of these studies that captures various research approaches used to study ambivalent sexism.

Given our interest here in a psychology of women, I'm going to focus now on three questions concerning the ASI that have implications for women: (1) What makes men

score high in hostile sexism? (2) What makes women score high on benevolent sexism?, and (3) What are the consequences of benevolent sexism for women?

**Hostile men.**    Hostile sexism is openly negative, and because it targets women as a group, HS potentially unfavorably affects all women. In this way, women have an obvious stake in understanding what causes men to endorse hostily sexist attitudes. For example, men who endorse HS are more likely to label resistance by women rape victims as wavering ("token resistance") and thus are more accepting of acquaintance rape (Masser et al., 2006). Additionally, men's high hostile sexism is directly related to opposition to policies targeting gender equality (Sibley & Perry, 2010), and high HS men (and women) enjoy sexist humor that belittles women (Greenwood & Isbell, 2002). In fact, the combination of HS men with sexist humor reduces men's willingness to support a women's organization (Ford et al., 2008).

Complicated modeling of the factors that influence men's endorsement of HS show that the most immediate predictor is men's beliefs in intergroup dominance and superiority (or "social dominance orientation"; Christopher & Mull, 2006; Sibley et al., 2007a). Chris Sibley and his co-authors (2007a) further found that what drives men's social dominance orientation is their view of the world as a competitive place and being high in the personality trait of tough-mindedness (being unsympathetic, unfeeling, ruthless, and harsh). Other research adds to the list of antecedents to HS by pointing to men's narcissism (an exaggerated sense of deservingness; Keiller, 2010) and college men's overestimation of their peers' sexism (Kilmartin et al., 2008). In sum, men's HS is driven both by their own personalities and by their perceptions of contexts outside themselves.

**Benevolent women**.    More intriguing is benevolent sexism, which on the face of it seems positive. People tend to think that benevolent sexism is not all that negative for women (Bosson et al., 2010). Given these perceptions of the "benevolence" of BS, it is not surprising that there are wide individual differences in women's scores, including women who highly endorse BS.

However, the presumed benefits of BS (e.g., being protected and put on a pedestal) are undermined by a growing body of research looking at the causes of women's BS. Across a variety of studies, high levels of BS in women are associated with being in a hostile context, making women's BS appear to be an adaptation to a negative climate.

For example, Peter Glick, Susan Fiske, and a host of colleagues (2000) studied 19 countries, finding that women endorsed BS even more strongly than men in countries with strongly HS men. In contrast, in countries with men who scored lower in HS, women's BS scores were much lower than men's. In a clever experiment with American women, Ann Fischer (2006) created three experimental conditions simply by telling women that research shows that men's attitudes are generally negative, positive, or a no-information control. Women who believed that men hold negative attitudes about women scored significantly higher in BS than women in the other two conditions (and none of the groups differed on HS). In addition, women who held high levels of fear of crime also scored high in BS, and when Julie Phelan and her colleagues (2010) manipulated women's fear of crime in a follow-up study, these fearful women's BS exceeded that of controls. Thus, women's BS not only is associated with being in a hostile climate, but hostile contexts also *cause* women's BS to be elevated.

**Consequences of benevolence.** So what makes benevolence (by both women and by men) "sexist"; that is, oppressive of girls and women? Actually, BS alone does not "oppress" women; rather, it works in tandem with HS to keep women "in their place." BS provides the "carrot" (rewards) while HS is the "stick" (that doles out punishments).

The bottom line is that the benefits of BS extend only to some (traditional) women (Glick et al., 2002), which then serves to restrict women to the roles "protected" by these benevolent attitudes. For the women who step outside these traditional roles, HS insures negative and limiting outcomes (remember those pregnant women looking for jobs in retail stores). HS targets prejudicial outcomes toward women who break from traditional roles and prescriptive stereotyping, simultaneously sounding a warning to other women not to cross this line, and thus limiting women's favorable options. In sum, there's quite a downside to "benevolence," which *prescribes* what women *ought* to do—be traditional and hence liked (Glick & Fiske, 1999a).

Given this logic, we would predict that women would expect hostility for those nontraditional women who step outside protected roles as well as benevolence for women who conform. Indeed, this pattern is what Julia Becker (2010) found in her study with German women. When these women completed the ASI were told to think about nontraditional women—either feminists or career women—their HS scores were higher. In contrast, women's BS scores were higher when they thought about traditional women (housewives).

But even for the women who adhere to traditional roles and thus reap the immediate benefits of BS, benevolence comes with strings attached. Miguel Moya and his colleagues (2007) explored women's reactions to restrictions imposed "for your own good" across a series of three studies. In the first study, only high BS women accepted their husband's (but not their coworkers') prohibition against driving on a long car trip. In their second study, women's intimate partners objected to their participation in a practicum counseling dangerous men, either with justification ("I am concerned for your safety") or without. Whereas most women deferred to the justified advice, only high BS women accepted the prohibition delivered without any rationale. Their final study paralleled the second, but this time the partner's advice was not specific to the woman: "It is not safe for any woman". In this case, only high BS women accepted the restriction. Overall, when men's dominance is paired with women's BS attitudes, women comply with restrictions to their own pursuits.

There are other studies demonstrating that women's own BS has costs. Women (and men) who endorsed BS had restricted views of what behaviors are appropriate for women to engage in during courtship (Viki et al., 2003). High BS Spanish women were more likely to believe that the husband in a hypothetical vignette would be threatened by his wife's promotion and would react with violence, even when this vignette described the man as supportive (Expsito et al., 2010). Young Spanish women in high school who endorsed BS were more likely to do feminine-typed household chores, perpetuating the gender-typing of these tasks (Silvan-Ferrero & Lopez, 2007). Furthermore, women's own BS is linked to higher endorsement of HS directed at women in general, making these women active participants in maintaining gender inequality (Sibley et al., 2007b). Notice that across all of these studies, women's BS helps to maintain the status quo, thus keeping women "in their place."

Not only does women's own BS affect them, but so does the BS of others. Women exposed to others' BS reacted with higher levels of body shame and appearance monitor-

ing (Shepherd et al., 2011) and by emphasizing their own warmth over their competence (Barreto (2010). Belgian undergraduates confronting BS in the context of a job interview felt more incompetent afterwards, reported intrusive thoughts during a subsequent task, and took longer to complete a simple grammar test (Dumont et al., 2010).

Benoit Dardenne and his colleagues (2007) conducted a fascinating series of four experiments with Belgian students and nonstudents in simulated job interviews in which recruiters expressed benevolent, hostile, or no (control) attitudes. The hostile statement conveyed that women had to be hired despite incompetence and weaknesses, whereas the benevolent statement promised to employ equal performing women and to extend protections and goodwill toward them. Across different tasks described as relevant to the desired job, women consistently performed worse when exposed to BS—showing few effects of HS, which they appeared to discount. Although these women did not identify BS as sexist, they did regard BS (and HS) as unpleasant, but BS, more than HS, caused mental intrusions to interfere with their performance, created self-doubt and anxiety, and decreased women's self-esteem, even though the context ostensibly valued feminine skills. What these experiments convincingly demonstrated after ruling out various alternative possibilities is that the effects of BS are insidious and real. Benevolent sexism truly is sexist!

# PERPETUATING SEXIST STEREOTYPING

Given the consistency with which people can identify sexist stereotyping, it likely comes from and is maintained by widely shared processes. Some people suggest that the universality of gender stereotyping reflects a "kernel of truth"; that is, stereotypic images are accurate representations of most women and men. In this way of thinking, even exceptions "prove the rule." However, we saw in the previous chapter how social contexts can minimize or make salient stereotyping and in doing so, reduce or enhance its impact. If stereotyping can be varied across contexts, then this argues that its roots are in contexts, specifically widely shared contexts. Three likely sources and perpetuators of stereotyping are (1) the media, (2) language, and (3) expectancies and behaviors.

## *Media*

There is extensive research evidence pointing to sexualized stereotyping of women's appearance across all forms of media, and we'll explore this research later in Chapter 10. Not surprisingly, content analyses of television commercials continue to document the dominance of traditional images of frivolous, less competent women (Davis, 2003; Rouner et al., 2003), although these images co-exist with a smattering of nontraditional images that emerged throughout the 1990s (Bresnahan et al, 2001; Coltrane & Messineo, 2000). Here I want to concentrate on how persistent patterns in the media work to affect both men's treatment of women and women's own aspirations.

In a clever study exploring how ads affect men, Laurie Rudman and Eugene Borgida (1995) **primed** one group of college men with sexist television ads. These men then prepared for and participated in a simulated job interview with a woman candidate. Their behaviors were compared to those of a control group of men who had not been exposed to sexist ads. Men who had seen the sexist ads selected more sexist and inappropriate ques-

tions to ask the woman job candidate, sat closer to her, rated her as more friendly but less competent, and afterwards remembered more about her physical appearance and less about her biographical background. In sum, more primed men stereotyped the woman applicant as a traditional sex object (likeable but incompetent), and they acted accordingly. These findings suggest that sexist media portrayals of women (and men) encourage sexist prejudices and stereotyping that can lead to discriminatory behavior.

Turning to the direct effects of media on women, Paul Davies and his co-authors (2005) first showed that short-term exposure to traditional television advertisements led women to elect to be followers rather than leaders on a subsequent task (Study 1). These researchers then went on to link this effect to the activation of gender stereotyping (Study 2). When women viewed traditional, real-life ads, they were quicker to recognize gender-stereotyped words (housewife and caring)—showing that gender stereotypes had been *automatically* activated by viewing the commercials. These reaction times, in turn, predicted their reduced leadership aspirations. In other words, stereotype activation mediated the relationship between seeing ads and lowered aspirations.

Further speculating that **stereotype threat** was driving their findings, Davies and his colleagues conducted a third study in which they told women that there is no evidence of gender differences on the leadership task. Despite having seen the traditional ads and having stereotypes automatically activated, women in the identity-safe environment in which stereotype threat had been de-activated showed no relationship between stereotype activation and their leadership aspirations. In other words, removal of stereotype threat countered the impact of the traditional ads and restored women's leadership aspirations. In sum, this series of studies tells us a lot about how traditional ads affect women without their awareness of these effects, as well as suggest ways in which we can counteract these negative patterns.

## Language

Language becomes sexist when we unnecessarily distinguish between women and men or exclude, trivialize, or diminish either gender (Parks & Robertson, 2000). Often we delimit what is considered to be the exception to the rule (the *woman* engineer and the *male* nurse). We also use gender forms that tend to trivialize women, such as "girl" for an adult woman. Some of this deprecation of women is done by association, for example, by sexualizing terms (madam), and by **objectification**, for example, in demeaning sexual slang which more commonly targets women (Grossman & Tucker, 1997).

Probably the most pervasive form of sexist language is the exclusion of women, sometimes subtly and other times blatantly. For example, when asked to name "famous people," women and men named more men than women (Moyer, 1997). In contrast, when prodded to identify famous "men or women," the gap between men and women named narrowed for male respondents and closed completely for female respondents. Using sexist language also is a good sign that a person also harbors sexist attitudes. For example, individuals scoring as generally sexist (on the Modern Sexism scale) were more likely to use sexist language and not regard sexist language as sexist (Swim et al., 2004).

Language also can shape how we think about topics of critical importance. Sharon Lamb and Susan Keon (1995) examined the language used to describe male partner abuse. Consider the following descriptions of the same events:

"Elizabeth Jones' husband beat her, raped her, and committed gross sexual abuse against her"

<div align="center">versus</div>

"Elizabeth and Charles Jones had an abusive relationship, in which there were beatings, rapes, and gross acts of sexual abuse."

The first version uses the active voice as opposed to shared responsibility in the second. Lamb and Keon found that students assigned the most lenient penalties to the abuser when this shared responsibility form was used. Along these lines, newspapers continue to report more personal information about male crime victims, and researchers found that empathy for a victim increased when more personal information was provided (Anastasio & Costa, 2004).

Recognizing the importance of language, the *Publication Manual of the APA* (2010, pp. 73–77) provides some helpful guidelines about how to reduce bias in language concerning not only gender but also sexual orientation, racial and ethnic identity, disabilities, age, and across history. Thus, paying attention to language is a professional responsibility.

## Expectancies and Behavior

In addition to media and language, sexist stereotyping can be perpetuated by the actual behaviors of women and men, suggesting a possible "kernel of truth" to stereotypes. Inherent in this reasoning is the assumption that when women and men act in stereotypic ways, the root cause of their behavior is something internal to them. This assumes that there is something about women and about men that makes them act stereotypically so that their behavior, in turn, verifies the stereotyping.

We already saw in Chapter 6 that gender stereotyping can affect women's and men's social behaviors, roles, and occupations, but we did not explore the mechanisms that drive these outcomes. According to the **self-fulfilling prophecy**, expectations can make anticipated events come true (Jussim, 1986; Merton, 1957; Miller & Turnbull, 1986). A classic example describes "runs" on banks during the Depression of the 1930s; when people feared that their bank would close, they rushed to withdraw their money, panic spread, and the bank soon closed. What people expected to happen, happened.

Extending this logic to gender stereotyping, Berna Skrypnek and Mark Snyder (1982) conducted a clever study. Because the design is complicated, it helps to understand the findings first and then consider the procedure. Skrypnek and Snyder showed that when a man expected to be interacting with a woman, the woman acted like women are supposed to act. When another man thought he was interacting with another man (but his partner was really a woman), the woman acted in line with her partner's expectations by responding in masculine ways. The man's expectations were fulfilled by his partner's behaviors, even when those expectations and behaviors were at variance with the partner's true gender. In the end, the partner's behaviors confirmed the stereotyping *expectations* of the male participant.

Turning to Skrypnek and Snyder's procedure, male-female pairs arrived separately at the lab and were kept away from each other. Some of the men were told that their partner was a man; others were led to believe that their partner was a woman. The pairings always included one man and one woman so that some men were misinformed about the gender of their partner. Which men were misinformed was determined randomly. Each partnered pair was given a list of 12 pairs of tasks. The tasks were masculine (bait a hook), feminine

(frost a cake), or neutral (score tests), and the task pairs included all combinations. The participants' job was to agree on who would do each task in a pair. They communicated their preferred choice through signal lights so that the partners never interacted directly.

In the first round, the man selected first, and he understandably treated his partner in accordance with his expectations. For example, he might prefer to bait the hook and leave his partner to frost the cake when he believed his partner to be a woman. On the other hand, for those men informed that their partner was a man, some agreed to ice the cake. All men relied on stereotyping to initiate their interactions with their partner—something we'd expect because the only concrete information these men had about their partner was the gender they were told.

The really interesting findings came in the second round of 12 different task pairs when the woman chose first. Women whose partner believed them to be women made feminine task selections; in contrast, women whose partner believed them to be men chose masculine tasks. These women's seemingly free choices were influenced by their partners' expectations, which must have been subtly conveyed to them through their exchanges in the first round. These women displayed gender-consistent, stereotypic behaviors, not because they were women (in that case, all women would have made feminine selections),[7] but because of what their partners expected. The man's prophecy was fulfilled.

Summing up, even finding apparent confirmation in women's and men's stereotyped behaviors doesn't necessarily verify that stereotypes are true; that is, reflective of genuine, internal characteristics of women and men. When women and men act in concert with sexist stereotyping, it may be because that is what is expected of them, not because there's a "kernel of truth" in stereotyping. In other words, people's stereotypic behaviors may be as much the products of stereotyping itself as the cause of it. A circular pattern that is mutually reinforcing may be established. See Box 7.5 for a more contemporary example and for a diagram of the self-fulfilling prophecy.

# REDUCING STEREOTYPING

There is growing evidence that stereotyping is so embedded in our culture that activating stereotyping is virtually automatic (Devine, 1989). Both high- and low-prejudice people know and use negative stereotyping when they can't monitor their behavior. But, given adequate opportunity to think about what they are doing, only low-prejudice people avoid stereotyping. Thus, discrimination does not spring automatically from being non-prejudicial. Rather, *avoiding the pitfalls of knee-jerk stereotyping requires active monitoring,* even by those with open attitudes.

**Stereotyping** is an attempt to find meaning in unknown circumstances (Fiske, 1993). Thus when people are unknown to us, we can fall back on social categories to try to fill in gaps in our understanding. Thus, it would seem that a key toward reducing stereotyping is to have **individuating information**; that is, knowledge about the specific traits, role behaviors, occupation, and physical characteristics unique to that person (Fiske & Von Hendy, 1992). Getting to know others by being in contact with them makes a differ-

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[7]If women and men made their choices based solely on what they like to do, their choices would be idiosyncratic and no patterns related to gender would have been found in the data. However, gendered patterns were found, thus ruling out this possibility.

Box 7.5
The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

Given what we know about stereotype threat, there's nothing we wouldn't have anticipated in the first of two experiments conducted by Amy Kiefer and Margaret Shih (2006). Women were more sensitive than men to negative feedback about their performance on a math test, attributing their own failure to deficits in their math abilities—a domain which we know is male-stereotyped. (The feedback was contrived and randomly provided, with no gender differences in number of math problems attempted and in actual performance.)

Their second study is needed to make the point I want to highlight here about the self-fulfilling prophecy. In this experiment, women (and men) who received negative feedback about their math performance—and then made attributions about the cause of their performance—had a chance to pick the second exam they wanted to take. Just over 80% of the women and just over 60% of the men in this condition elected to switch to a verbal task. Most notably, although gender obviously predicted task choice, this relationship was fully mediated by ability attributions. The more both women and men attributed their alleged failure to their own abilities, the more likely they were to elect to discontinue working on math tests.

Given that women are more likely to internalize math failures because of stereotyping linking math ability to boys and men (Study 1), women are thus more likely to give up on math (Study 2), which in turns confirms that indeed math is a masculine domain. The cycle, depicted below, thus becomes self-sustaining.
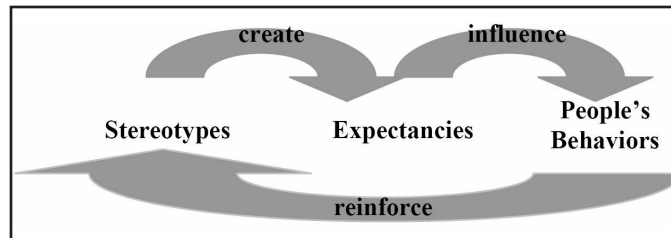


ence: For example, a meta-analysis looking at the relationship between contact and sexual prejudice directed at lesbians ($r = -.30$) and gay men ($r = -.27$) documented that increased contact indeed reduced prejudice (Smith, Axelton, & Saucier, 2009).

However, people tend to avoid individuating information that might debunk their stereotyping (Trope & Thompson, 1997). Participants sought out more individuating information about a hypothetical person when their social category (being feminist or Jewish) did *not* match the attitude issue being considered (U.S. support for Israel versus the Equal Rights Amendment, respectively). In other words, people asked less about a feminist target when considering the ERA than they did in the context of thinking about support for Israel.

We might cling to our stereotyping as a way to affirm who we are. Participants in one study were more likely to negatively stereotype a hypothetical woman job candidate when their own self-image was threatened by negative feedback (Fein & Spencer, 1997). Indeed, negative stereotyping paid off in terms of improved self-esteem among those who were threatened. In contrast, those who were exposed to a self-affirmation procedure avoided negative stereotyping. Thus, all patterns across these data point to compensatory benefits derived from negative stereotyping.

Stereotype expression, accessibility, and in-group favoritism all are reduced to the extent that one can take the perspective of the "other" (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000).

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Box 7.6

How funny are the following jokes?

"How do you recognize a friendly motorbike rider?
        Flies are stuck in his teeth."

"When does a woman lose 99% of her intelligence?
        When her husband dies."

"Why can't women be both good-looking and intelligent at the same time?
        Because then they would be men."

  German college men found the second two and other sexist jokes like them funnier when they were forced to rate them under time pressure than when they could take their time and think about them (Eyssel & Bohner, 2007). Time pressure made no difference for nonsexist jokes like the first one. Why might this be?
  Paralleling explicit and implicit attitudes, we can process information with either explicit cognition (deliberate judgments about which we are aware) or implicit cognition (automatically activated evaluations occurring outside our awareness; Kahneman & Frederick, 2002). Time pressure may force the male judges in this study to make snap judgments that draw on implicit cognition, which upon more careful thought (explicit cognition) can be overridden.
  Applying this point more broadly, then, it takes effort and uses cognitive resources to avoid stereotyping. Given that stereotyping is so ingrained in our culture, it is hard to imagine that even the most non-prejudicial people don't implicitly stereotype sometimes. The key then may be not to assume that because one is not prejudiced, one doesn't stereotype. Rather, we all may be better served by actively working at trying not to engage in stereotyping and to catch ourselves when we unintentionally do.

*Source*: Eyssel, F., & Bohner, G. (2007). The rating of sexist humor under time pressure as an indicator of spontaneous sexist attitudes. *Sex Roles, 57*, 651–660.

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Additional hedges against relying on stereotyping are for the evaluator to be held publicly accountable for her or his judgment (Tetlock, 1992), for standards of evaluation to be clearly delineated (Fiske & Taylor, 1991), and for accuracy to be stressed and given sufficient attentional resources (Biesanz et al., 2001). The more objectively verifiable the standards of assessment are, the less subjective are the judgments, and the less they fall back on stereotyping. Bottom line: Reducing stereotyping takes work!

# SEXIST DISCRIMINATION

What we have seen so far is that individuals vary in their attitudes toward the roles and rights of women (prejudice) and that there are different beliefs about women and girls (stereotyping) involving their traits, role behaviors, occupations, and physical characteristics. We have argued that what makes these prejudices and stereotyping sexist is that they work to oppress women and girls by limiting them to traditional roles. A key point in our argument requires that we link these sexist prejudices and sexist stereotyping to overt behaviors with meaningful consequences. This is where **sexist discrimination**, *acts* that serve to oppress women and girls, comes in.

Nijole Benokraitis (1997) insightfully distinguishes among three *forms* of sexist discrimination. **Blatant sexist discrimination** is obvious; it refers to the inequitable and harmful treatment of women that is intentional, highly visible, and can be documented easily. Examples include sexual harassment, sexist language and jokes, and physical violence. **Covert sexist discrimination** is hidden, purposeful, and frequently maliciously motivated; for example, insiders may intentionally try to sabotage women to ensure women's failure when they gain access to formerly all-male jobs. **Subtle sexist discrimination** is typically less visible and obvious; it may go unnoticed; it may be innocent and unintentional or manipulative, intentional, and malicious; and it is difficult to document. Today, it's the most common form of sexist discrimination. Be sure to check out Figure 7.7 for a clear example of subtle sexism that would likely go undetected if we didn't have experimental data.

Given the subtlety of many contemporary examples of sexist discrimination, much of it goes largely unseen and/or unconfronted. Still, there are wide differences in how much sexist discrimination individual women do detect. One frequently used catalogue of these perceptions is the Schedule of Sexist Events (SSE) developed by Elizabeth Klonoff and Hope Landrine (1995). These experiences span general instances of sexist degradation (e.g., the number of times a woman has been called a sexist name or gotten into an argument or fight about something that was done or said) to specific sources of unfair treatment by strangers and acquaintances, friends and family, and in the workplace. In the scale authors' original study with 631 student and community women ranging in age from 18 to

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Figure 7.7    A Rose by Any Name… ???

Not really. In this simple but very telling study, Millicent Abel and Andrea Meltzer (2007) presented the same written lecture to male and female undergraduates. The topic of the lecture was pay disparities between women and men, and it was written to convey factual information as well as instill a perception of sexist discrimination in the American workforce. The only difference in the two versions (randomly assigned to student evaluators) was the name of the professor alleged to have presented the lecture to their first-year sociology class: Dr. Michael Smith or Dr. Mary Smith. Each of the ratings graphed below is significantly different, capturing usually-hard-to-prove subtle sexist discrimination. In fact, without the comparisons made possible here, we'd never know for sure that sexism was happening.
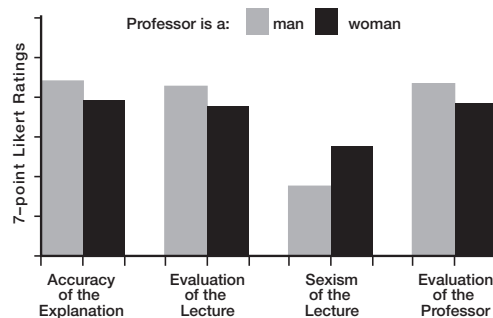


In another study focused on students' ratings of professors, male students were less likely to nominate a woman as their "best" professor, after controlling for the number of female professors they actually had, whereas women's selections of women were representative of their pool of possibilities (Basow et al., 2006). Not surprisingly given the data above, men continued to describe their "worst" female professors as "closed-minded."

73, the lifetime prevalence of such experiences was staggering. For example, fully 82% reported being called sexist names, and two-thirds had gotten into arguments about sexist occurrences. More recent data collections with the SSE continue to document these occurrences in women's lives (Landy & Mercurio, 2009).

As you might expect, women who report more experiences with sexist discrimination also report higher levels of psychological distress (Szymanski et al., 2009) and loss of personal control—with personal control partially, but not fully, explaining the relationship between SSE scores and distress (Landy & Mercurio, 2009). In a sample of college students, women with high scores on the SSE exhibited more mental health problems (including somatization, obsessive-compulsiveness, depression, and anxiety) than both low SSE women and all men (Klonoff et al., 2000). In another study, SSE scores combined with high levels of psychological distress to predict both binge drinking and smoking among college women, and there was a direct relationship between perceived sexism and smoking to control weight for all women (Zucker & Landry, 2007). SSE scores also were related to depression and anxiety among college women (Fischer & Holz, 2007).

These effects are not confined to the SSE. Women scientists who reported experiencing more sexual harassment and gender discrimination also recorded poorer job outcomes (Settles, et al., 2006), and women engineering students who were forced to interact with sexist men experienced threats to their identities and diminished performance on an engineering test (Logel et al., 2009). Latina and White female adolescents who reported hearing sexist comments about girls' and women's math abilities believed that they were less good at math, as well as devalued and disliked it (Brown & Leaper, 2010), and 11-year-old girls who valued egalitarianism and who were purposively discriminated against in an experiment experienced reductions in their social acceptance self-esteem (Brown et al., 2010).

However, sexist discrimination is not typically acknowledged or confronted by many women, not only because of its subtlety but also because there are some good reasons for women not to "see" it. For example, many women believe that men think women are responsible for their own disadvantage (Boeckmann & Feather, 2007), and indeed, unless men are directed to show empathy for targeted women, most men don't think everyday sexist discrimination is all that harmful (Becker & Swim, 2011). A study with college students recruited to keep a diary of their experiences with gender prejudice across 2 weeks resulted in not only a large number of reported incidents (825 from the 81 women and 183 from the 22 men, averaging about 3 incidents each day), but also elevated negative emotions among only the women (Brinkman & Rickard, 2009). In two experiments purposively exposing women and men to a discriminatory person or a discriminatory rule, women and men were both more likely to attribute blame to a rule than to a person, but women were even more reluctant than men to blame the person—especially when that person would be harmed by their accusation (Sechrist & Delmar, 2009).

Exploring some contexts in which women are more likely to confront perpetrators of sexism also can help fill in some of this picture. For example, women college students were more likely to report confronting sexism when they self-labeled as feminist, when the perpetrator was familiar and of equal status (as opposed to unfamiliar and high status), and when they were targeted with sexist comments (rather than unwanted sexual attention or sexual harassment); (Ayres et al., 2009). Although women consider taking more assertive action in response to discrimination than they actually do, when they do confront it, they

achieve better outcomes (Hyers, 2007)—including heightened feelings of competence, self-esteem, and empowerment (Gervais, Hillard, & Vescio, 2010).

Looking across this growing literature on sexist discrimination, there is a convergence across different types of data collections to suggest that daily hassles with sexism are common in women's everyday lives. These experiences can be "unseen" and not taken seriously one-by-one; however, over time, they can accumulate so that targets eventually carry a "ton of feathers" (Caplan, 1993). Each "feather" (incident) alone may be light and bearable, but together they still weigh a ton. An example of how such subtle insults or "microaggressions" pile up for women lawyers is documented by Beth Bonniwell Haslett and Susan Lipman (1997), and they have been shown to have serious consequences for people of color (for example, see Sue et al., 2007). There is currently very little research looking at the impact of such repeated exposure to microaggressions targeting women, however; the concept itself helps convey the seriousness with which we need to think about sexist discrimination.

# CHAPTER SUMMARY

Sexism includes sexist prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination, all of which operate to oppress women and girls by limiting their choices. Sexist prejudice appears less blatant now than in the past, taking more subtle forms like denial of continuing discrimination, antagonism toward women's demands, and resentment about special "favors" for women.

Gender stereotyping focuses on traits, role behaviors, occupations, and physical characteristics, which combine to form consistent clusters of stereotyped women. These clusters may be traditional (homemakers and sexy women) or nontraditional (athletes, businesswomen, and feminists). Looking at two fundamental dimensions of stereotyping (competence and warmth), nontraditional women are viewed as competent but unlikeable and are targets of envious prejudice. In contrast, traditional women are regarded as warm but incompetent, engendering paternalistic prejudice. It is the evaluative meaning of stereotypes that moves gender stereotyping away from simple descriptions containing a possible "kernel of truth" to instruments of sexism.

Because most, if not all, stereotyping of real (not presumably generic) women combines either warmth with low competence or competence without warmth, sexist prejudices are ambivalent, mixing hostile negativity with seemingly benevolent attitudes. However, even these apparently benign forms of prejudice serve to maintain sexist stereotyping within a system of inequality that ultimately serves to limit the roles prescribed for girls and women and thus oppresses them.

Sexist stereotyping is perpetuated by the media, language, and even our own behaviors, which are responsive to others' expectancies in a cycle of self-fulfilling prophecies. Researchers have shown that sexist stereotyping can be reduced by vigilant monitoring (even by those without negatively prejudicial attitudes), by individuating targets (when desired), by making evaluators publicly accountable for their actions, and by standardizing assessments.

Sexist discrimination can be blatant, covert, or subtle, with subtle discrimination being the most common and insidious. Although sexist prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination are not perfectly related so that only the most blatant sexists exhibit all of these aspects of sexism, they generally are mutually supporting. The common link among them, whether they appear on the surface as hostile or benevolent, is that they work together to

oppress women and girls. In Chapter 1 we defined feminism as a movement to end sexist oppression. Thus, the elements of sexism discussed in this chapter become critical targets for feminist activism.

# SUGGESTED READINGS

Cuddy, A. J. C., Fiske, S. T., & Glick, P. (2004). When professionals become mothers, warmth doesn't cut the ice. *Journal of Social Issues, 60*(4), 701–718.

    Amy Cuddy, Susan Fiske, and Peter Glick review the "stereotype content model," which provides the conceptual model used in this chapter for thinking about stereotyping as a process, as well as frames this discussion within an issue important for many students: blending employment with family.

Goodwin, S. A., & Fiske, S. T. (2001). Power and gender: The double-edged sword of ambivalence. In R. K. Unger (Ed.), *Handbook of the psychology of women and gender* (pp. 358–366). New York: Wiley.

    Although written in the more dense form appropriate for a handbook, Stephanie Goodwin and Susan Fiske's chapter is approachable and clearly links sexist prejudice and stereotyping to power and gender, cutting to the heart of the present chapter.

Yoder, J. D., Hogue, M., Newman, R., Metz, L., & LaVigne, T. (2002). Exploring moderators of gender differences: Contextual differences in door holding behavior. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 32*, 1682–1686.

    Our study encourages readers to think about an everyday occurrence (who holds a door for whom) and its subtle, often overlooked meaning for power relations and sexism.

Glick, P., & Fiske, S. T. (2011). Ambivalent sexism revised. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 35*, 530–535.

    In this approachable commentary written to celebrate the 35th anniversary of APA Division 35's journal, Peter Glick and Susan Fiske give readers a behind-the-scenes peak at the development of the concept of ambivalent sexism, discuss its meaning and value, and speculate about some future research directions. (A podcast interview with these authors is available at *pwq.sagepub.com*.)

Rudman, L. A., & Glick, P. (2008). Progress, pitfalls, and remedies. *The social psychology of gender: How power and intimacy shape gender relations*. (pp. 285–310)New York: Guilford Press.

    In this chapter of their overall fascinating book, Laurie Rudman and Peter Glick bravely and effectively tackle the tough question raised by social role theory about whether women's and men's roles are fundamentally changing in the 21st century and thus leading the way toward greater gender equality.