

Ambivalent Sexism and attitudes toward women's sport

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Notions and definitions of sexism have often focused on two central components: hostility toward women and the endorsement of traditional gender roles (Glick & Fiske, 1997). To capture the role of these two components, Glick and Fiske (1996, 1997, 2001) presented a view of sexism based on ambivalent sexism theory which distinguishes between benevolent and hostile sexism, particularly how these distinct aspects address issues of power, gender differentiation, and sexuality. Ambivalent sexism theory has been utilized in numerous disciplines such as psychology, gender studies, and sociology to explore phenomenon ranging from reactions to sexist jokes (Greenwood & Isabell, 2002) to sexual harassment (Russell & Trigg, 2004). However, this theory has not been widely applied to the study of gender and sport.

Nonetheless, sport presents itself as a perfect laboratory for the integration of ambivalent sexism. There is a plethora of literature which examines and discusses male structural power and hegemony as it relates to sport (Burstyn, 1999; Creedon, 1998; Kane, 1989). Specifically, Messner (2002) notes that sport “organizations even while appearing gender neutral, tend to reflect, re-create, and naturalize a hierarchical ordering of gender”(Messner, 2002, p.9; attributed to Acker, Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies, 1990).

Applying ambivalent sexism theory to sport would position some of the attitudes surrounding females as more benevolent ideologies. That is, members of the dominant group (i.e., men) may possess “genuine affection”for members of the exploited subordinate group (i.e., women) (Glick & Fiske, 1997, 120). In addition, the interpersonal relationships between men and women create conflict when viewing sexism as only for the purpose of creating hostility, thus granting women a dyadic power (Guttentag & Secord, 1983). As Glick and Fiske (1997) note “women are not typically viewed in a purely hostile fashion.” While benevolent sexism can be viewed as a chivalrous ideology that encourages men to protect women, hostile sexism “predicts negative evaluations of the type of woman who challenges traditional gender roles”(Fischer, 2006, 410). This aspect of sexism justifies male power and the exploitation of women through the sexual objectification of females.

These aspects of sexism present themselves chiefly in three attitudes, each adopting a benevolent and hostile form. Complementary gender differentiation represents the belief that women are different from men in positive ways (e.g., enhanced moral decision-making). However, competitive gender differentiation is the hostile form of this when men seek to boost their confidence and esteem by asserting that they are superior to women. Protective paternalism is the idea that women desire and need protection offered by men. However, dominative paternalism is the belief that women must be controlled by men, hence the more hostile manifestation. Lastly, heterosexual intimacy is a form of ambivalent sexism that purports that men need women to lead whole, happy lives (Fischer, 2006). The hostile approach, heterosexual hostility, views women as sexual objects. It must be noted, that while the root of benevolent sexism may not be hostile in nature, the result still contributes to the continuation of male dominance and gender inequality.

The Ambivalent Sexist scale revealed that “hostile sexism (HS) is directed toward nontraditional women (e.g., career women, feminists), whereas benevolent sexism (BS) is aroused by women in traditional roles”(Glick & Fiske, 1997, 129). Further, aspects of hostile sexism, such as the sexualization of women, has been consistently documented throughout studies of media and women’s sport (Davis, 1997; Fink and Kensicki, 2002; Kane & Greendorfer, 1994; Weiler and Higgs, 1999). Thus, since women’s sport actively contests the limitations of gender and sport as a male preserve, hostile sexism may pose a greater role in attitude formation regarding women’s sport than benevolent sexism. This leads to our first hypothesis: H1: After controlling for involvement with women’s sport, there will be a significant negative correlation between measures of hostile sexism and attitude toward women’s sport. Further, several studies have shown that, overall, men exhibit higher levels of sexism than women (Masser & Abrams, 1999; Viki & Abrams, 2003). Jost and Banajai (1994) indicated that, regarding sexism directed at women, “members of the target group (women) report more positive attitudes toward their own group than do outgroup members makes intuitive sense (Fischer, 2006, 411).”This leads to our second hypothesis: H2: There will be an interaction between gender and measures of hostile sexism on attitude toward women’s sport.

To examine these hypotheses, a questionnaire is being administered to undergraduate students at two universities in the northeast. Measures in the questionnaire include Glick and Fiske’s (1997) 22-item summated rating scale ($\alpha=.82$) to assess benevolent (11 items $\alpha=.63$) and hostile sexism (11 items; $\alpha=.86$). Involvement was measured using a three item semantic differential scale ($\alpha=.97$) adapted from Trail and James (2001), and attitude was measured using Roy and Cornwell’s (2003) three

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item semantic differential scale ($\alpha=.99$). To examine hypothesis 1, a correlation between hostile sexism and attitude toward women's sport will be conducted. To test hypothesis 2, a hierarchical regression will be conducted with attitude toward women's sport serving as the dependent variable and involvement, gender, hostile sexism, and benevolent sexism as the independent variables. Involvement will be entered in the first step with the remaining IV's entered in the second step. While currently, we don't have enough subjects to properly perform the analysis, preliminary analyses have been conducted ($n=54$). Correlations revealed a significant negative correlation between hostile sexism and attitudes toward women's sport ($-.439, p<.01$). Thus, generating support for hypothesis 1.

Additionally, the preliminary regression analysis shows involvement explained 32% of the variance while gender, hostile sexism, and benevolent sexism explained 8.6% of the variance in attitude toward women's sport. However, only involvement ($p<.001$) and hostile sexism ($p=.017$) were significant. Benevolent sexism and gender were not significant. Further analysis indicate an interaction between gender and hostile sexism correlations between female attitudes toward women sport and hostile sexism are not significant ($-.132$) while there is a significant correlation between male attitudes toward women sport and hostile sexism ($-.52; p<.01$). Thus, generating support for hypothesis 2. Our initial findings suggest that while sexism may influence males' attitudes toward women's sports, there are other factors driving female attitudes toward women's sport. This presentation will offer complete results, further discussion, and implications for marketers of women's sport seeking ways to 'tap' into the female market.