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# Benevolent Sexism: Manifestation in American Social Systems

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BENEVOLENT SEXISM: MANIFEST IN AM SOCIAL SYSTEMS

Benevolent Sexism: Manifestations in American Social Systems

by

Amanda D. Greubel

A Banded Dissertation in Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Social Work

St. Catherine University | University of St. Thomas  
School of Social Work

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### Abstract

This banded dissertation focused on the manifestation of benevolent sexism in American social systems, past and present. Benevolent sexism takes a subjectively-positive view of women in traditional roles, revering them as gentle, nurturing, and in need of protection by men or other more powerful members of society. These beliefs fall into three categories: protective paternalism, complementary gender differentiation, and heterosexual intimacy.

The first product was a historical textual analysis of documents from the Council on Social Work Education Task Force on Women. In 1973, the task force surveyed programs about their curricular content on women. Four themes were identified in the survey responses: women as individuals with power, women as objects, women as problem, and no content on women/unsure of need for content. Curricular materials reflected orientations of complementary gender differentiation and heterosexual intimacy.

The second product was a qualitative case study analyzing Texas House Bill 2, a law regulating abortion providers. Four themes were identified from primary source legislative and court documents: the state has the right to protect women, women need protection from “bad players,” women are emotional, and women are mothers/vessels. Results indicated that language reflecting protective paternalism and complementary gender differentiation was used to justify restricting women’s access to pre-viability abortion.

The third product was a poster presentation given at the Council on Social Work Education Annual Program Meeting in October 2017. This presentation outlined the conceptual framework, results from the case study research discussed in product two of the banded dissertation, and implications for social work practice. The presentation provided an opportunity to engage social work educators in a discussion about benevolent sexism as a lens for public policy analysis.

The results of this banded dissertation indicated that benevolent sexist ideologies have been present at a systemic level for decades in common settings, such as education programs and policy-making bodies. Inclusion of appropriate curricular content on complex issues of gender and skills in policy analysis and advocacy will allow social workers to effectively challenge attitudes of benevolent sexism in larger systems, protecting the rights and freedom of all persons.

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## Table of Contents

Title Page.....	i
Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Introduction.....	1
Conceptual Framework.....	3
Summary of Banded Dissertation Products.....	4
Discussion.....	5
Implications for Social Work Education.....	6
Implications for Future Research.....	7
Comprehensive Reference List.....	9
Curricular Content on Women: Gender Equity in Social Work Education.....	21
Benevolent Sexism in the Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers (TRAP): A Case Study of Texas House Bill 2.....	50
Benevolent Sexism in Reproductive Health Policy: <i>Whole Woman’s Health v. Hellerstedt</i> .....	79

### Benevolent Sexism: Manifestations in American Social Systems

The focus of this banded dissertation was the manifestation of benevolent sexism in American social systems, past and present. Throughout history, gender-based inequality has been a fact of life in many societies. As a form of prejudice, sexism is exhibited in various ways – from catcalls, to stereotyped media portrayals, to unequal pay, and sexual violence. Movements such as women’s suffrage and women’s liberation have affected societal ideas about traditionally-feminine roles and norms, opening up more opportunities for women’s full participation in society.

The ongoing changes in women’s rights have changed the way sexism is identified, as well. Ambivalent Sexism Theory was first introduced by Glick and Fiske (1996) as a way of understanding sexism as a two-sided coin, including hostile and benevolent expressions. Hostile sexism includes those aspects of sexism that are typically associated with overtly sexist behavior - opinions of women as incompetent, derogatory words and actions, sexual exploitation, and gender-based violence.

On the other hand, benevolent sexism takes a subjectively favorable view of women. This type of sexism is characterized by beliefs that fall into three main categories: protective paternalism, complementary gender differentiation, and heterosexual intimacy. According to Begun and Walls (2015), “protective paternalism advocates for men as protectors and providers for women, particularly given men’s status as stronger, more powerful, and authoritative members of society” (p. 203). Complementary gender differentiation identifies women as gentle and nurturing, revered in their roles as mothers and caregivers. These qualities are complementary to men who are expected to be tough and stoic. Heterosexual intimacy reflects an idealization of women as objects for the fulfillment of men’s physical and psychological needs.

Begun and Walls (2015) also stated that traits valued by those with benevolent sexist beliefs are reflective of “traditional” roles assigned to women. Women who conform to those roles are seen as warm and likeable, and at the same time dependent and unable to succeed in positions of power. As a result, “benevolent sexism augments the hierarchy by offering conciliatory but diminished roles to women” (Begun & Walls, 2015, p. 203). Conversely, women who do not conform to these roles may be seen as competent, but are socially-vilified and may become the target of hostile sexism. With the presence of a stratified “in-group, out-group” system, women who wish to maintain or increase their standing in this power structure are encouraged to exhibit disdain for those who refuse to conform. As a result, benevolent sexist beliefs are rarely challenged and may be internalized and endorsed by women themselves. Advocacy efforts toward true gender equity have difficulty gathering sufficient support. Those responsible for perpetrating inequality are rarely held accountable.

Various studies have examined the impact of benevolent sexism on individual women’s cognition and social behavior. A series of four separate experiments by Dardenne, Dumont, and Bollier (2007) found that experiences of benevolent sexism undermined women’s performance on cognitive tasks by triggering thoughts of self-doubt that affected working memory. Wakefield, Hopkins, and Greenwood (2012) found that awareness of benevolent sexist stereotypes made women less willing to ask for help when needed.

The effect of benevolent sexism on the willingness of people to restrict the freedoms of others has also received some research attention, especially in the area of reproductive health. Sutton, Douglas, and McClellan (2011) discovered that people with strong benevolent sexist ideologies were more willing to restrict pregnant women’s dietary, social, sexual, travel, sleep, and exercise choices; yet, scientific evidence demonstrated that such restrictions were

unnecessary. Huang, Osborne, Sibley, and Davies (2014) found that survey respondents with a high level of benevolent sexist attitudes demonstrated little support for abortion regardless of the circumstances, indicating that “there is no greater role for a woman than motherhood” (p. 445).

While the individual impact of benevolent sexism has been explored, little research exists on using this theory as a lens through which to view larger systems. This banded dissertation explored the presence of benevolent sexist ideologies within two different systems at two different points in history: social work education during the 1970’s and legislative and judicial systems in the present day. The two contexts provided an opportunity to consider historical manifestations of benevolent sexism, as well as how those same attitudes continue to affect women’s rights and freedom today.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Ambivalent Sexism Theory was proposed by Glick and Fiske (1996) to explain how sexism includes both negative and subjectively positive attitudes toward women. I chose to focus specifically on benevolent sexism as a conceptual framework because the associated subjectively-positive attitudes and actions are often not recognized as sexism. As a result, it is possible that decisions made within larger systems may not be identified as openly sexist as long as they appear to promote a positive view of women as valued members of society.

The organizing principles of benevolent sexism include: protective paternalism (women must be protected and provided for by men and those in power); complementary gender differentiation (women are gentle and nurturing, qualities that complement men who are tough and stoic); and heterosexual intimacy (women exist as objects for the sexual and psychological fulfillment of men; Begun & Walls, 2015). In the first product, these principles were used as a lens to consider curricular content on women in social work education in the 1970’s. In products



two and three, benevolent sexism was used as a framework to examine the introduction, passage, and legal defense of a Texas law passed in 2013 to regulate abortion providers.

### **Summary of Banded Dissertation Products**

The first product was a research article using historical archival methods to explore the formation and early activities of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Task Force on Women in Social Work Education. In 1973, this task force surveyed social work education programs in the U.S. about their curricular content on women. At the time, choices about curricular materials in social work programs were considered indicative of their commitment to eradicating sexism and understanding women's full contributions to society. Thematic analysis of survey results revealed four primary themes in curricular materials: women as individuals with power, women as objects, women as problem, and no content on women/unsure of need for content. This article focused on the content of primary sources and indications of general sexism at the time and did not specifically reference the concept of benevolent sexism. However, many traditional textbooks and other materials in use in the 1970's revealed benevolent sexist attitudes of complementary gender differentiation and heterosexual intimacy. They included little or no content about women in any roles other than wives, mothers, and heterosexual partners to men. Though expectations for curricular content have shifted through the years, sexism continues to affect social workers in both education and practice settings.

The second product of this banded dissertation was a research article that examined Texas House Bill 2 (HB2), a bill passed by the 83<sup>rd</sup> Texas State Legislature in 2013 imposing targeted regulations on abortion providers. This law was struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2016 in the case of *Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt*. This qualitative case study used critical discourse analysis and the framework of benevolent sexism to evaluate primary sources,

such as legislative and court documents. Four main themes were identified: the state has the right to protect women, women need protection from “bad players,” women are emotional, and women are mothers/vessels. Results indicated that language reflecting protective paternalism and complementary gender differentiation was used in the context of policy-making to justify restricting women’s access to the constitutionally-protected right to pre-viability abortion. Social workers and other advocates must remain vigilant in their consideration of language used by proponents of legislation that limits the freedom of any group, including women.

The third product of this banded dissertation was a poster presentation at the Council on Social Work Education Annual Program Meeting in October 2017 in Dallas, TX. The conference theme was “Educating for the Social Work Grand Challenges.” This presentation addressed the 12<sup>th</sup> grand challenge, “achieve equal opportunity and justice” by outlining the conceptual framework of benevolent sexism, results from the case study research in product two, and implications for social work practice. The presentation engaged social workers and social work educators in discussion about benevolent sexism and its use as a lens for public policy analysis. Feedback from the presentation indicated that attendees were supportive of the research and interested in the ways benevolent sexism affects reproductive health and other social issues.

### **Discussion**

Results indicated that benevolent sexist ideologies have been present at a systemic level for decades in settings such as education programs and policy-making bodies. These attitudes affect decisions at multiple levels, from the materials presented in social work curricula to the creation of social policies that limit women’s reproductive rights. A 1973 survey demonstrated that social work students were taught the most important roles for women were in the home as wives and mothers; those who strayed from tradition were problematic. The themes identified

through historical archival research reflected benevolent sexist concepts of complementary gender differentiation and heterosexual intimacy.

Forty years later in 2013, Texas HB2 was passed and defended in court using language of protective paternalism and complementary gender differentiation. These benevolent sexist concepts were used by policy makers to limit women's access to reproductive healthcare. Huang et al. (2014) identified benevolent sexism as a form of social control that "cajoles women to accept the monitoring of their behaviors" (p. 438). This was evident when legislators of both genders asserted the best way to keep women safe was to restrict their constitutionally-protected rights.

Because benevolent sexist ideologies are often perceived as a positive view of women, they are difficult to challenge. Those who are uncomfortable with valuing women primarily as wives and mothers or with restricting their rights to keep them safe, may struggle in articulating their concerns about seemingly reasonable policy efforts. Policies reflective of such attitudes are present in multiple settings, including educational institutions, organizations, and all levels of government. Social workers must engage in effective advocacy by identifying subtle limitations placed on women due to underlying attitudes of benevolent sexism. Social work education programs teach policy analysis and advocacy skills that serve as a catalyst for change.

### **Implications for Social Work Education**

The predominance of students identifying as women in social work education programs does not indicate a post-gender era in the profession. Educators may assume that women are well-aware of their own struggles and fail to sufficiently address women's health and rights. Sexual orientation and gender identity may be mentioned briefly throughout programs, but are rarely discussed in-depth. Complexity surrounding the concept of gender combined with the

increasingly-crowded social work education curriculum may lead instructors to question where this additional content will fit. Such concerns often result in gendered content being relegated to elective courses, allowing students who need this foundational knowledge to opt-out. Tice (1990) reported concerns about the ineffectiveness of the “add a woman and stir” (p. 1) approach to including gender in social work curricula. In order to be effective, content on gender must be integrated across the curriculum beginning with generalist courses, such as practice skills, policy, human behavior theory, research, and ethics. Instructors teaching advanced specialization courses must also review materials regularly to ensure the development and use of gender-balanced curriculum materials.

In addition to having appropriate content on gender, social work students must also develop the skills to critically analyze policies at multiple levels and recognize their effect on vulnerable populations, such as women. Presenting frameworks for policy analysis based on theories, such as benevolent sexism, may help students recognize underlying problems with policies that limit rights, but on the surface appear reasonable. Once issues are identified with specific policies, students must have the skills to advocate effectively for legislative and judicial actions based on scientific evidence and respect for the constitutional rights of all persons.

### **Implications for Future Research**

Since the introduction of benevolent sexism more than 20 years ago, research has found that experiences of benevolent sexism negatively affect women’s cognition, social behavior, and willingness to ask for help when needed (Dardenne et al., 2007; Wakefield et al., 2012). People who held strong benevolent sexist beliefs were more willing to restrict women’s freedoms regardless of the circumstances, especially in circumstances of pregnancy and abortion (Huang et al., 2014; Sutton et al., 2011).

Considering the implications of previous research and the findings of research conducted for this banded dissertation, future inquiries should explore the use of benevolent sexism as a lens for the larger context of policy decisions. An updated survey of social work education programs would identify current curricular content related to gender. Interviews and focus groups with social work faculty may pinpoint factors that facilitate or inhibit the integration of gendered content. Social work researchers should also partner with other education programs to assess the inclusion of appropriate content on gender in psychology, sociology, education, medicine, criminal justice, business, political science, law, history, and theology.

Regarding public policies, additional research is necessary to establish the usefulness of benevolent sexism as a framework for policy analysis. As the subject of the case study in product two, Texas HB2 provided several obvious examples of protective paternalism and complementary gender differentiation. Future research should delve into other policy areas where gender may affect a person's access to services and resources, including: healthcare, criminal and juvenile justice, welfare reform, military assignments, domestic violence, sexual assault, equal pay initiatives, immigration policies, and equal protection policies based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Only when benevolent sexism is widely-recognized and understood in the context of policy-making can advocates achieve justice for all people.

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Curricular Content on Women: Gender Equity in Social Work Education

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### Abstract

Although the majority of social work practitioners, students, and clients in the 1970's were women, the content of social work education curricula at that time was rife with sexist bias. In 1972, the Council on Social Work Education appointed the Task Force on Women in Social Work Education to examine the content of program curricula with respect to women's issues. After seeking input through a national survey of social work education programs, the Task Force developed new curriculum resources and advocated policy changes in an effort to ensure that all programs would offer accurate and appropriate information on women. This article reports on the historical textual analysis I conducted using documents from the National Social Welfare History Archives at the University of Minnesota detailing the early work of this Task Force. I identified four themes related to curricular content: Women as individuals with power, Women as objects, Women as problem, and No content on women/unsure of need for content. These findings have implications for social workers and social work educators as they seek to understand the history of the profession and ensure accurate coverage of gendered content in today's curricula.

Keywords: social work education, curricular content, women, sexism, historical analysis

### Curricular Content on Women: Gender Equity in Social Work Education

The Women's Liberation Movement of the 1970's served as an important catalyst for change in many American social institutions. As a result of the increased focus on the oppression of women, the profession of social work and, by extension, social work education were forced to examine evidence of their own internal sexism. According to Kravetz (1976), the orientation to service and predominately female composition led people to believe erroneously that sexism did not exist in the profession of social work. Despite its reputation, McPhail (2008) describes the reality of social work as a "male-dominated, female-majority profession" (p. 35). A 1972 survey of members of the National Association of Social Workers revealed a significant wage gap depending on gender and a disproportionate number of men occupying administrative positions compared to women (York, Henley, & Gamble, 1987).

The situation in social work education was similar. In July 1973, over half of the full-time faculty in accredited graduate schools of social work in the U.S. were men. In July 1975, 88% of deans and directors of accredited graduate schools of social work were men (Kravetz, 1976). The underrepresentation of women faculty in social work education was not the only concern of those attending to issues of sexism within the profession; curricular content was another matter requiring consideration. Many popular theories and frameworks taught in basic social work courses such as human growth and development contained significant sexist bias (Schwartz, 1973).

In 1972, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) appointed a Task Force on Women in Social Work Education (hereafter known as the "Task Force") headed by Myrtle Reul, Professor at the University of Georgia School of Social Work (Alvarez, Collins, Graber & Lazzari, 2008). The charge to the Task Force was, among other things, to examine content of

curricula with respect to women's issues in schools of social work across the country. As the first step in this process, the group conducted a survey asking the deans and directors of all social work education programs in the U.S. for information on any courses, texts, and research projects related to women and women's issues. Based on the feedback, the Task Force worked to develop new curriculum resources and advocate for changes in accreditation policy to ensure that all programs would offer accurate and appropriate information on women.

This article reports on the historical textual analysis I conducted using documents from the National Social Welfare History Archives at the University of Minnesota detailing the early work of the Task Force. Using a process of thematic analysis, I identified four emergent themes found in the survey responses on curricular content: *Women as individuals with power*, *Women as objects*, *Women as problem*, and *No content on women/unsure of need for content*. The purpose of this article is to present evidence of sexist bias in social work education curricula in the 1970's and discuss the implications of these findings for present-day social workers and social work educators as they seek to understand the history of the profession and ensure accurate coverage of gendered content in today's curricula.

### **Literature Review**

Although much has been written about the early work of the Task Force, the primary focus has been on the status of women in social work education related to salary and rank. Based on my review of the literature, limited information has been reported on the actual findings of the curriculum survey completed by several schools of social work in 1973. This section provides information on the historical context of the Task Force formation, the status of women in social work education, and issues of curricular content on women. The forty-year evolution of these last

two topics provides a platform for applying the results of this historical analysis to the current context of social work education.

### **Historical Context**

Though social work has always been a female-majority occupation, opinions on women's contributions to the profession have shifted. Abraham Flexner's address to the National Association of Charities and Corrections in 1915 claimed that social work was not a "true profession." According to Abrams and Curran (2004), this declaration led some to attribute social work's lower status to the gender imbalance, implying that predominately female professions are unable to attain the same recognition as those controlled by men. Women who aspired to leadership roles were forced to use the very sexism they were attempting to escape as a tool to justify their presence in the social work profession, claiming that women as "natural" nurturers were uniquely qualified to be caretakers and decision-makers for vulnerable persons. Early social work reformers such as Jane Addams, Grace Abbott, and Julia Lathrop attained power within the profession based, in part, on such assertions (Abrams & Curran, 2004). Formed in 1952 when women were expected to adhere to "traditional" family roles, the CSWE's initial concern related to gender issues was the presence of too many women in the profession. This led to efforts to recruit more men as a way of increasing social work's prestige, leaving women underrepresented in administration and leadership roles (Trolander, 1997).

Social expectations of women shifted slowly throughout the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century until the racial tensions of the Civil Rights Movement stimulated action for gender equality. Historians assert that the Women's Liberation Movement of the late 1960's and early 1970's was catalyzed by multiple factors – the increased number of women entering the workforce, the 1963 release of Betty Friedan's book *The Feminine Mystique*, the amendment of the Civil Rights Act

of 1964 outlawing discrimination against women under Title VII, and the formation of the National Organization for Women (Trolander, 1997). With its focus on a wide variety of topics such as equal pay, reproductive choice, passage and ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment, access to birth control, child care, and increased social and economic power for women, the Women's Liberation Movement addressed many issues of importance to the profession of social work. As these efforts to establish equality of the sexes permeated social institutions throughout the 1970's, the social work profession was forced to examine its own internalized sexism in multiple areas.

### **Women in Social Work Education**

Accurate statistics on the exact gender makeup of the social work profession are difficult to ascertain. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, women accounted for 81.5% of those with the title of social worker in 2016 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2016). However, because title protection laws vary between states, some persons holding the title of social worker may not have been educated in accredited programs. The more accurate statistics come from the CSWE's annual reports identifying demographic data of persons just graduated from social work education programs (Schilling, Morrish, & Liu, 2008).

When CSWE released its first annual report in 1974, women accounted for 75% of Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) graduates, 65% of Master of Social Work (MSW) graduates, and 36% of doctoral graduates (Schilling, Morrish, & Liu, 2008). Through the years the percentage of women in each category increased. In 2015 (the most recent year available), 82.9% of BSW graduates, 79.8% of MSW graduates, 72.4% of DSW graduates, and 79% of PhD graduates were women (CSWE, 2016). While demographic trends show that the gender balance of social work is increasingly female, men continue to dominate the profession in other ways.

For example, Koeske and Krowinski (2004) found that male social workers' salaries were significantly higher, even after controlling for factors such as years of experience, education, job role, status, age, area of practice, and specialization. Women received approximately 90 cents for every dollar received by men. The authors compared their results to those obtained over the previous two decades and found this discrepancy had remained consistent over time.

Female faculty members in social work education have experienced similar phenomena. In 1974, women were underrepresented as only 44% of the faculty in social work education (DiPalma, 2005). Those women often occupied lower-status faculty positions, as 63% of full and associate professors and 88% of deans and directors were men (Kravetz, 1976). Not until 1990 did women outnumber men in social work faculty, with numbers continuing to increase since then. Even so, evidence of male domination continues to be found in the gaps in salary and the disproportionate number of men holding high-ranking positions. Tower, Lazzari, Faul, and Alvarez (2015) identified that female professors earned 98 cents for every dollar earned by a male professor, even when controlling for rank. Women also tended to occupy non-tenure track positions that are associated with lower pay and less job security. In addition to the underrepresentation and underpayment of women faculty in social work education, those attending to issues of sexism within the profession in the 1970's had significant concerns about the accuracy and relevance of curricular content on women.

### **Curricular Content on Women**

In a paper presented at the CSWE Annual Program Meeting, Schwartz (1973) addressed concerns about two textbooks commonly used in social work courses throughout the country. In Erik Erikson's 1950 text *Childhood and Society*, the author devoted 17 pages to the development of a white, Protestant boy, yet allocated only a single paragraph to adolescent female



development. Woman's influence in the wider text was limited to her maternal role in influencing her son's identity. Theodore Lidz's 1968 text *The Person* gave equal space to the development of females, but took a decidedly Freudian approach. For example, Lidz (1969, as cited in Schwartz, 1973) asserted that adolescent girls sought educational achievement in order to use their intellect "aggressively – phallically" (p. 66) and that adult women found happiness primarily in the roles of wife and mother. Rauch (1978) mentioned another 1968 text widely used at the time, *A Modern Introduction to the Family*, which described "father-daughter incest as a result of daughters acting out their oedipal wishes" (p. 389). Statements such as these found in key social work education texts demonstrate the existence of sexist bias in social work education curricula in the 1970's.

Schwartz (1973) asserted that the concern for social work education was that the use of gender-biased information in curriculum affected the practice skills of future generations of social workers. According to Rauch (1978), a majority of social work clients were women, a fact that could be explained by several factors. First, women outnumbered men in the population of the U.S. Second, women participated in mental health and other social services at a higher level than men. For example, three-fourths of people receiving public assistance were women due to their role as mothers, single heads-of-household, and primary caregivers for children. Third, women's longer life expectancy meant that women consumed a larger percentage of services for the elderly. Finally, the women's movement spawned a variety of new services targeting women as clients, such as abortion care, family planning, and support for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault (Rauch, 1978). Not only were social workers serving more women, they were serving women with specific needs requiring a high degree of sensitivity and competence.

Curricular resources that provided accurate and un-biased information about women were necessary to prepare students for effective practice with female clientele.

The fact that social work students were preparing to work with a largely female clientele using materials filled with explicit gender bias led to increasing concern within the profession. Fortunately, a growing awareness of feminist issues and efforts of women social workers resulted in a raised consciousness in the educational sphere. While CSWE allowed programs to modify existing courses or create new ones to increase the content on women, many educators doubted the effectiveness of the “add a woman and stir” (Tice, 1990, p. 1) approach to curricular change. Effectively integrating content on women required recognition of the diversity of women’s concerns and experiences, as well as the intersecting identities of class, race, and gender that impact knowledge. In addition, efforts to incorporate new material into a fully-developed curriculum drew accusations of interference with academic freedom (Loewenstein, 1976).

In 1977, CSWE adopted a curriculum statement requiring the “inclusion of curricular content on women” as a condition of program accreditation (Bentley, Valentine, & Haskett, 1999). Questions remained as to what level of inclusion was sufficient and what qualified as appropriate content on women. A survey conducted by Knight (1988) suggested that while topics like domestic violence and sexism were addressed in social work curricula in a number of programs, other topics like reproductive choice, sexual orientation, and sexism in the field of social work were not covered. Bentley et al. (1999) reported that even two decades later, female faculty members during site visits reported a dearth of content on women’s issues in the core social work curriculum. More recently, however, McPhail (2008) stated that adding information solely on women was insufficient in addressing new, more complex issues of gender. For

example, 21<sup>st</sup> century curricula should include the “importance of gender as an organizing principle of social life...complex discussions of feminism(s)...multiple gender models...new content on women in practice and policy...men and masculinities...the transgender experience...a critical awareness of gender grounded in critical thinking skills and consciousness raising” (p. 34).

Despite social work’s claim of prioritizing social justice and diversity, tensions over whether and how to incorporate gender-specific curricular content remain. Levin, Woodford, Gutierrez, and Luke (2015) found that 98.9% of graduate social work faculty support the inclusion of curricular content on women as “important” or “very important” and 95.2% rate the inclusion of content on sexism as “important” or “very important.” Though all respondents identified some level of support for content on both women and sexism, these findings indicate that issues of gender may be overlooked in social work courses in favor of content the faculty deem to be more important. For those who do choose to teach about gender, the resources for effectively incorporating up-to-date information into courses may prove difficult to find. In a study of 17 social work journals, Barretti (2011) discovered an 18.5% reduction in the number of articles published about women or women’s issues over two decades. The articles that were published reflected a shift in women’s social identity from worker and family member to welfare recipient and trauma survivor. Articles articulating themes of “work” and “race and gender” as related to women showed the most significant decline. These findings indicate a change not only in the number of articles reflecting content on women, but also in the roles and identities of women reflected in current literature.

British philosopher Edmund Burke stated, “Those who do not know history are destined to repeat it” (Burke & Stanlis, 1997). Issues of sexist bias in the field of social work remain

unresolved, perhaps because the history of the profession as it relates to women is not fully known or understood by a majority of social workers. The purpose of this article is to present evidence of sexist bias in social work education curricula in the 1970's. I will discuss implications of these findings for present-day social workers and social work educators in understanding the history of the profession and ensuring accurate coverage of gendered content in today's curricula.

### **Methods**

For the purposes of this study, I conducted archival research at the Social Welfare History Archives, located at the University of Minnesota Libraries in Minneapolis, MN. Collections examined included two file boxes of CSWE documents related to the Task Force on Women in Social Work Education and one box from the Verne Weed Collection titled "Barbara Joseph Papers." I reviewed more than 150 pages of documents related to curricular content, including letters, meeting minutes, handwritten meeting notes, memoranda, course outlines/syllabi, and survey responses from 1972-1977. Each document was reviewed a minimum of three times over a period of eight days: once during the initial viewing, a second time when categorized into themes, and a third time for inclusion in this manuscript.

The documents were initially examined using a process of historical analysis. According to Gardner (2011), historical analysis is a method of understanding the past through systematic evaluation of "traces" left behind, usually written documents. Historical analysis of archived material is especially appropriate for researching marginalized populations such as women, since primary documents may offer a more complete account of the group's activity than is provided in "official" records. I then conducted a thematic analysis of the survey responses to identify themes about curricular content on women. Byrne (2016) defines thematic analysis as a method

of examining text or other qualitative data to identify themes. Stages of thematic analysis include an initial review of the documents, development of a set of themes based on both a pre-existing understanding of the topic and emergent ideas, and coding of data elements that represent the themes.

According to Lundy (2008), establishing reliability and validity of primary source documents in historical research is challenging. Reliability of these sources is based on trustworthiness of the original author including their biases, perceptions, and whether they are reporting firsthand knowledge of an event or someone else's experiences. The CSWE documents examined for this study primarily include documents prepared by members of the Task Force. By virtue of their involvement in the group, these individuals were assumed to have a bias toward the proposal that sexism within the curriculum needed to be addressed. Information in meeting minutes and other prepared memos was filtered through the perceptions of the original authors. However, documentation of feedback from other CSWE members and survey responses from persons outside the task force provide support for the conclusion that sexism did exist in social work education curricula in the 1970's. In addition, Gardner (2011) states that the reliability of primary sources is increased by their availability as unmodified artifacts in open archives. These documents are available in their original form for review by the public at the Social Welfare History Archives.

Validity of primary sources is based on external review for authenticity and ensuring that the documents were created in a specific time period other than the present (Gardner, 2011; Lundy, 2008). Primary source documents are donated to the archives by the organizations or individuals who created them, or by their executors, heirs, or legal agents (L. Anderson, personal

communication, February 20, 2017). Through this process validity of the documents is assumed, though not completely assured.

## **Findings**

### **Task Force on Women in Social Work Education**

Formation of the Task Force was formally proposed by social work educator Myrtle Reul and approved by the CSWE Board of Directors on October 20, 1972 (CSWE, 1973a). The official charge for the Task Force states, “While women constitute a majority of social work practitioners and a large portion of social work’s clientele...the curriculum content on the subject of women [has] been given limited attention in social work education” (CSWE, 1973b, p. 1). During its first official meeting on April 13-14, 1973, the Task Force identified a preference for content on women that was infused throughout the curriculum and a need to evaluate current content to “correct stereotypes and identify gaps” (Purvine, 1973, p. 5).

### **Survey of Programs**

The group determined that information on current curriculum content including course outlines, modules, bibliographies, faculty or student research studies, theses, and dissertations must be collected from graduate and undergraduate social work programs as a first step in assessing the present situation and need for new materials (CSWE, 1973c). On June 11, 1973, a letter and survey were mailed out to the deans, directors, and coordinators of graduate and undergraduate social work programs informing them of the purpose of the Task Force and requesting information on content on women utilized in the program curriculum (Reul, 1973). Responses were returned by several social work programs and were analyzed for this study using thematic analysis. Four themes that emerged were (a) *Women as individuals with power*, (b) *Women as object*, (c) *Women as problem*, and (d) *No content/unsure of need*.

**Women as individuals with power.** Barry College School of Social Work (1973) submitted a course syllabus for “Women’s Studies” indicating that the course objectives were “to examine attitudes toward women, as well as their attitudes towards themselves from psychological and sociological perspectives” and “to broaden students’ awareness of the issues involved in the changing roles of women” (p. 1). The Adelphi University School of Social Work (Rothman, 1973) planned to incorporate new materials related to women in the Human Behavior sequence and offer a course entitled “The Women’s Movement in Social Work” in fall 1974.

The University of Michigan School of Social Work (Herberg, 1973) submitted a syllabus for a course titled, “Women and the Practice of Social Work.” The introduction to the course stated, “This social work course is about some feminist issues as they apply to the social work profession now...The new feminism or Women’s Movement seeks to create the conditions to show and demonstrate that women are as fit or capable of any mental achievement that men are” (p. 1). Materials submitted by Marycrest College included syllabi for mini-courses titled, “Women and the Law” and “Women in American Society.” The “Women in American Society” course was team-taught with members from the local National Organization for Women chapter and addressed the goals “to provide knowledge, theoretical and practical, about women in American society” and “to raise consciousness” (Tracy, 1973, p. 1). Spalding University’s syllabus for the course “Feminist Perspective on the Social Welfare Movement” (Wilhelm, 1973) stated:

The occupation of social work is a traditionally female response to her own and others’ oppression. However, although history is replete with examples of women as promoters of other people’s liberation and pioneers in the field of social work, there is a curious lack of achievement of full human rights for women paralleling other social reforms. This

course will explore the nature of patriarchal society, efforts to reform social inequality, the development of the field of social work by women, retention of sexist notions by institutionalized social welfare (particularly in the area of mental health), implications for social work practice. (p. 1)

These examples indicate that in the early 1970's, some schools of social work were creating and teaching content which portrayed women as individuals with power, capable of moving beyond the stereotypical feminine roles of the time. Social work students in these courses were challenged to examine previously-held sexist attitudes toward women (their own as well as society's) in light of developments in the Women's Liberation Movement in order to move social work practice with and by women in a new direction.

**Women as objects.** Mississippi State College for Women School of Social Work (Hayes, 1973) reported:

In our department we have a course aimed at freshman and sophomores called Courtship, Marriage, and Family Living. We also teach Dynamics of Marriage and Family Living for juniors and seniors. Both of these touch on the contemporary roles of women, changing dating patterns, changing sexual patterns, early marital adjustment problems, child rearing, and role conflicts... We have an interdepartmental sequence on the contemporary woman... The courses offered in this sequence are: Fashion, Introduction to Modeling, Modeling, Home Management, Family Living, Personal Finance, Dynamics of Leadership, Choosing Values, and Life Styles of Contemporary Women.

Fordham University School of Social Service submitted a syllabus for the "Foundations in Behavioral Sciences" course indicating a section titled "Women in Society" (Gabriel, Chazin, Mintz & Peropat, 1973). The description stated, "The growing concern about the changing role



and status of women in American Society is considered here. The implications of these changes for the childhood socialization process, marriage, world of work, etc. are included” (p. 5).

University of Iowa lists “Sexuality and Social Work Practice” as its only course related to women (Snider, 1973). Based on these examples, it appears that some schools of social work in the early 1970’s offered content depicting woman only as an object for the use of others – to sell clothing, to manage the home, and to serve as a wife, mother, and sexual partner. This type of curricular content in social work education perpetuated the idea that women had limited capacity to fulfill societal roles.

**Women as problem.** In addition to the above-listed survey response, Mississippi State College for Women School of Social Work stated, “Women’s Liberation is a topic covered in Social Problems” (Hayes, 1973). St. Louis University reported:

We do not have any separate courses or programs on the subject of women, in either the undergraduate or master’s program. The problems of women are dealt with however in the context of a number of courses, both core required courses and in electives, especially around the organizing concept of roles, for example...in the human behavior sequence such as Family Dysfunctioning; in the Practice Theory sequence...two classes are devoted to dealing with problems related to the role of women. (Ebbinghaus, 1973)

The response from Indiana University – Purdue University School of Social Work indicated, “We have nothing specific to women as such. One of our faculty members has done research on how menstrual periods affect the judgments of women” (Laurence, 1973). These examples indicated a belief in some social work programs that women’s role changes, social advancement, and even their natural biological processes were problematic for society.

Problematizing women's liberation as an issue in need of social work intervention served to maintain the status quo and reinforce sexist stereotypes.

**No content on women/unsure of need for content.** Several schools, such as Southern University, responded to the survey question about curricular content on women with the word "None" (McJulian, 1973). Michigan State University School of Social Work's response to the survey stated, "We are developing a graduate course on women in social work (with some reluctance as to its viability) ..." (Andrew, 1973). The University of Kentucky College of Social Professions reported, "We have not developed any special material on the subject of women at the College and see no real need for doing so... Our students are encouraged to take courses offered by various departments in the University" (Witte, 1973). The returned survey from Tulane University School of Social Work simply says, "Not applicable" (Southerland, 1973). These responses indicating a dearth of content on women in some social work programs illustrated a lack of resources, a lack of willpower, or both. Failure to incorporate such content demonstrated to students that women as a population were not deserving of accurate and appropriate curricular attention, allowing sexist stereotypes to persist.

### **Survey of Participants at CSWE Annual Program Meeting**

Following the survey of social work programs, the Task Force decided to gather input from female educators attending the CSWE's 1974 Annual Program Meeting (APM), as well. At two open sessions hosted by the Task Force, participants were given a questionnaire asking them to identify their area of greatest professional need and rank the following items in order of importance: "Curriculum, Student programming, Faculty, Admission, Others" (Reul, 1974, p. 1). Despite verbal messages from attendees that curricular content should not be the focus of the Task Force, "Curriculum" was the top area of need identified in the questionnaires. Specific

curricular concerns indicated were “the elimination of stereotyped roles; women in therapy, especially family therapy; theory regarding feminine roles; and the whole area of human behavior and social environment” (Ripple, 1974, p. 2).

### **Accreditation Policy and Curricular Materials**

Based on responses to the program survey and APM questionnaire, the Task Force identified two goals related to curricular content on women: changes in program accreditation policy and development of updated curriculum materials (Ripple, 1974). In June 1974, the CSWE Commission on Accreditation approved modifications to accreditation standards as recommended by the Task Force (Bernard, 1974). Under the new Accreditation Standard 1234 (Women), programs were required to avoid sex-based stereotyping and include current knowledge about women and women’s contributions to society in all curricular areas in order to maintain accreditation (Ad Hoc, 1974).

Development of new course materials on women’s issues in social work continued throughout the 1970’s. For example, in 1977 members of the Task Force contacted Barbara Joseph, professor of social work at the State University of New York - Stony Brook requesting she contribute a chapter to a text on women’s issues. The letter referenced feedback received from schools of social work that “they are trying very hard to include more content on women’s issues in their curriculum” but “there is very little published to meet this need” (Norman & Mancuso, 1977). Over the next several decades, the Task Force sustained its focus on the creation and dissemination of new materials on women and gender in order to support curricular change in social work education programs (Trolander, 1997). This effort was eventually adopted as a primary function of the re-named Council on the Role and Status of Women in Social Work Education (CSWE, 2014).

### **Discussion**

The purpose of this article is to present evidence of sexist bias in social work education curricula in the 1970's. The findings of this historical analysis as well as a review of the existing literature on curricular content in social work education programs at that time support the conclusion that such bias did exist. Many social work programs lacked content that accurately and appropriately reflected women's roles and concerns. This situation resulted from both a shortage of appropriate teaching materials and a lagging understanding of the importance of women's full participation in society. Sexist bias in social work education curricula left social work students unprepared to provide quality services to a largely-female clientele.

### **Application to Social Work Education**

Though expectations about curricular content on women have shifted through the years with changes in accreditation standards and available materials, sexism continues to impact social work education. The concept of gender has become increasingly complex and expressions of bias are more subtle, making them difficult to identify and address. Educators must be aware of the impact of gender (their own and their students') on advising practices, teaching styles, and course materials. The predominance of students identifying as women in social work programs does not indicate a post-gender era in the profession. Instructors cannot be afraid to address politically-difficult topics such as reproductive rights, sexual health, sexual orientation, and gender bias throughout the curriculum so that new social workers enter the profession prepared for the complex gender issues that will impact their practice.

Social work education programs may begin by reviewing generalist courses such as practice skills, human behavior theory, policy, research, and ethics through a gendered lens before moving on to specialized courses. Instructors in established fields of practice such as child

welfare, healthcare, addictions, and mental health should review materials regularly to ensure that dated theories and practice models reflecting gender bias are removed from rotation.

Educators in newer specializations such as military social work and trauma-informed practice must consider the experiences of women as clients and workers, beginning with development of gender-balanced curriculum materials.

### **Application to Social Work Practice**

Advocacy outside of academia will also play an important role in addressing sexism in the profession. Social workers must monitor developments in assessments and tools such as the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* for signs of imbedded gender bias. They must engage with government officials around explicitly gendered policy issues such as reproductive rights, equal pay for women, paid family leave, services for those experiencing domestic violence and sexual assault, and legal protections for all regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity. Such policies impact the rights and resources of vulnerable people as well as the services that social workers can provide. Practitioners must maintain awareness of the impact of gender on their own experiences and the experiences and needs of individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

A key strength of this study was my use of original survey responses regarding curricular content on women in the early 1970's, basing the thematic analysis on primary source documents. Additional archival materials from the founding and early work of the Task Force provided important context for the surveys, including information that may not have been reported in an official capacity elsewhere. However, archival documents also provide a limited perspective. The materials examined for this study represented a single point of view, and only

information deemed important by the Task Force was retained for their records. Additionally, Gardner (2011) identifies the researcher's difficulty in putting aside personal biases and preconceptions when engaging materials from a different era as a limitation of historical analysis.

### **Future Research**

Considering the curricular needs of social work education programs forty years ago stimulates questions about curricular needs today. An updated survey of programs should focus on curricular content beyond the male-female binary to include complex topics such as gender identity, sexual orientation, gender-based violence, reproductive rights, intersectional feminism, toxic masculinity, human trafficking, and gender in politics. Information from this type of survey could be extended through interviews or focus groups with social work faculty about their perceptions of gender in the curriculum to identify factors that facilitate or inhibit inclusion of such content.

### **Conclusion**

Social work education is the very foundation of professional development. If that foundation is tainted with sexist bias, the social worker's ensuing practice, understanding of the profession, and identity as a vehicle of social change is compromised, as well. Prior to the formation of the Task Force, generations of social workers were taught that while women could be individuals with power, they could also be objectified, problematized, or ignored. While positive changes occurred as a result of new accreditation standards and teaching materials, educators today face political and practical challenges to including accurate and appropriate content on gender in their curricula. As social work strives to maintain its identity as a social

justice profession in a rapidly-shifting world, issues of gender must remain at the forefront of educational and professional efforts.

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Benevolent Sexism in the Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers (TRAP):

A Case Study of Texas House Bill 2

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## Abstract

Benevolent sexism encourages a subjectively-positive view of women as gentle, nurturing, and in need of protection – characteristics associated with “traditional” feminine roles. While studies show that people who express attitudes of benevolent sexism are willing to restrict pregnant women’s choices, limited research exists on the impact of benevolent sexism in social policy. Using a single-case study method and benevolent sexism as a conceptual framework, I examined the introduction, passage, and legal defense of Texas House Bill 2 (HB2), a targeted regulation of abortion providers (TRAP) law. House Bill 2 was passed by the Texas legislature in 2013 and ruled on by the U.S. Supreme Court in the 2016 case *Whole Woman’s Health v. Hellerstedt*. This qualitative case study used data from primary sources, including legislative and court documents. Four themes were identified: the state has the right to protect women, women need protection from “bad players,” women are emotional, and women are mothers/vessels. Results indicated that language reflecting benevolent sexism was used in the context of policy-making to justify restricting women’s access to the constitutionally-protected right to pre-viability abortion.

Keywords: benevolent sexism, case study, abortion, policy



Benevolent Sexism in the Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers (TRAP):

A Case Study of Texas House Bill 2

Throughout history, gender-based inequality has been a subject of debate in many societies, including the U.S. According to Nicodemo (2012), “women have faced intense discrimination, from a lack of legal rights and very little independence from their husbands, to being thought to have inferior brains” (para. 1). Over the years activists sought policy change to recognize women’s equality within marriages, workplaces, educational institutions, and voting booths. The Women’s Liberation Movement of the 1970’s focused on a variety of topics: equal pay, childcare, increased social and economic power for women, and access to birth control and abortion. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was amended to outlaw discrimination against women under Title VII and ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment was debated in Congress (Trolander, 1997). While the U.S. has made great strides in recognizing women’s humanity and rights, discrimination against women through sexism continues to plague American society at both the individual and systemic levels of decision-making.

With the on-going changes in women’s rights have come changes in the way sexism is understood, as well. Identified by Glick and Fiske (1996), benevolent sexism takes a subjectively favorable view of women, revering them as tender, nurturing, and dependent. Those who express benevolent sexist beliefs primarily value women in “traditional” roles such as wives, mothers, and caregivers. Women who adhere to these roles are rewarded with positive social interactions, whereas those who appear to defy these roles are often vilified. Because these attitudes are still perceived as evidence of a positive view of women, they are rarely challenged openly and are internalized and endorsed by women themselves. As a result, advocacy efforts toward true

gender equity have difficulty gathering sufficient support and those most responsible for perpetrating inequality are rarely held accountable (Begun & Walls, 2015).

Though the impact of benevolent sexism on individual attitudes has received some attention, limited research exists on social policy implications. While the sexist beliefs of decision-makers could affect any type of legislative effort, policies related to reproductive health and freedom present a clear connection and are relevant to current conversations. I used the case study method and benevolent sexism as a conceptual framework to examine the introduction, passage, and legal defense of Texas House Bill 2 (HB2), “An act relating to the regulation of abortion procedures, providers, and facilities; providing penalties” (H.B. 2, 2013, p. 1). House Bill 2 was passed by the 83<sup>rd</sup> Texas State Legislature in 2013, ruled on by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2016 in the case *Whole Woman’s Health v. Hellerstedt*, and represents an increasingly-common type of abortion restriction through provider and clinic regulation.

## **Literature Review**

### **Benevolent Sexism Defined**

Ambivalent Sexism Theory was first introduced by Glick and Fiske (1996) as a way of understanding sexism as a two-sided coin, including hostile and benevolent manifestations. Hostile sexism includes overtly sexist behavior – opinions of women as incompetent, derogatory words and actions, sexual exploitation, and gender-based violence. On the other hand, benevolent sexism takes a subjectively favorable view of women. This type of sexism is characterized by three categories of beliefs: protective paternalism, complementary gender differentiation, and heterosexual intimacy. According to Begun and Walls (2015), protective paternalism is a belief that women lack competence to do for themselves and must be protected and cared-for, especially by men as the “stronger, more powerful, and authoritative members of

society” (p. 203). Complementary gender differentiation values women as gentle and nurturing, revered in their roles as mothers and caregivers. These qualities are seen as complementary to tough and stoic men. Heterosexual intimacy reflects an idealization of women as sexual objects available for the fulfillment of men’s need for physical and psychological closeness (Begun & Walls, 2015).

### **Impact of Benevolent Sexism on Individual Beliefs and Actions**

Multiple aspects of benevolent sexism affect individuals’ beliefs and actions about women and their right to a full range of reproductive health choices. Begun and Walls (2015) report that people whose beliefs are consistent with benevolent sexism value “traditional” roles assigned to women – mothers, wives, caregivers, and nurturers. Women who conform to those roles (i.e., maintaining traditional heterosexual relationships and bearing children) are seen as warm and likeable, but also dependent and unable to make decisions effectively. These beliefs and their effect on attitudes about women’s reproductive freedoms have been demonstrated (Begun & Walls, 2015; Huang et al., 2014; Sutton et al., 2011).

In a study of 160 female undergraduate psychology students, Sutton et al., (2011) discovered that participants with strong benevolent sexist ideologies were more willing to restrict pregnant women’s dietary, social, sexual, travel, sleep, and exercise choices. Begun and Walls (2015) studied data collected from undergraduate students at six U.S. colleges and universities, discovering that increases in the endorsement of sexist ideas – hostile or benevolent – positively correlated with increased anti-choice attitudes. Huang et al. (2014) identified benevolent sexism as a form of social control that “cajoles women to accept the monitoring of their behaviors” (p. 438). In a survey of more than 6000 adults in New Zealand, they found that people with a high level of benevolent sexism demonstrated very little support for abortion, including in cases of

rape, incest, or danger to the life or health of the mother. Such attitudes indicate that “to the benevolent sexist, there is no greater role for a woman than motherhood” (p. 445).

### **Impact of Benevolent Sexism at the Social Policy Level**

The most common way that women make decisions about motherhood is by utilizing various reproductive health options, including contraception and abortion. Despite the implications of these decisions for a woman’s health, access to the full range of reproductive choices in the U.S. is not determined by a person and their physician, but through the often-contentious policy efforts of legislatures and courts. For example, the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Eisenstadt v. Baird* (1972) legalized distribution of birth control to any adult, married or unmarried. With *Roe v. Wade* (1973) the court legalized abortion, then affirmed in *Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania et al. v. Casey* (1992) that women have the right to obtain an abortion before the fetus is viable without “undue interference” from the state. *Casey* identified the state’s “legitimate interests from the outset of the pregnancy in protecting the health of the woman and the life of the fetus that may become a child” (*Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, 1992, p. 846). But, these interests do not supersede the woman’s right to a pre-viability abortion or justify the “imposition of a substantial obstacle” to this right (p. 846).

In the decades since these rulings, state governments continue attempts to regulate, restrict, and even eliminate women’s access to various reproductive healthcare options, especially abortion. These efforts often take the form of policy provisions limiting the circumstances where a woman may obtain an abortion and how it is paid for. According to the Guttmacher Institute (2016a), 48 states and the District of Columbia have passed some type of restriction on abortion availability. While some of these policies are not currently in effect due to court injunctions, many have been codified as state law.

**Targeted Regulation of Abortion Provider (TRAP) laws.** An increasingly-common type of abortion restriction is the use of provider and clinic regulation, a practice called Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers (TRAP). According to the Guttmacher Institute (2016b), TRAP laws require that physicians performing abortions have admitting privileges at a nearby hospital and abortion clinics conform to the state's ambulatory surgical center (ASC) standards. ASC standards differ from state to state, but generally include physical plant requirements such as corridor width, procedure room size, and closet space.

Targeted Regulation of Abortion Provider laws are introduced under the auspices of promoting the health and safety of women seeking abortion care, despite research indicating that abortion is already a safe procedure. An in-depth study of abortion-related complications by Upadhyay et al. (2015) revealed that only 0.16% of women who had a first-trimester surgical abortion experienced a major complication that required treatment in a hospital. In a review of 57 studies on first-trimester surgical abortions by the Texas Policy Evaluation Project (2015), the low rate of major complications was consistent regardless of whether the procedure took place in an office-based clinic, an ASC, or a hospital-based clinic. In addition, the justification of promoting women's health and safety is inconsistent with evidence showing that abortion carries a lower risk of complications than other procedures that take place outside of ASCs, and do not require hospital admitting privileges. For example, Raymond and Grimes (2012) found that childbirth is 14 times more likely to result in death than abortion. However, the state of Texas allows women to give birth at home while attended by a midwife (Texas Midwifery Act, 1999).

**Effect of TRAP laws on women's healthcare.** In July 2013, the state of Texas passed a TRAP law titled HB2, "An act relating to the regulation of abortion procedures, providers, and facilities; providing penalties" (H.B. 2, 2013, p. 1). By October 2013 any doctor performing an

abortion was required to have active admitting privileges at a hospital within 30 miles. By September 2014, all abortion clinics were required to meet standards equivalent to ASCs (H.B. 2, 2013). Gerds et al. (2016) found that by July 2014, more than 50% of the licensed abortion clinics in Texas had closed following enforcement of the admitting privileges requirement. Glass (2016) identified the difficulties physicians faced in obtaining hospital admitting privileges, including requirements that the doctor establish local residency, perform a certain number of hospital-based procedures per year, or admit a certain number of patients per year. The looming ASC requirement guaranteed more shutdowns, as only eight of the remaining clinics could meet the physical plant standards and the cost of coming into compliance was prohibitive for the remaining clinics (Texas Policy Evaluation Project, 2015).

Grossman et al. (2014) stated that as a result of clinic shutdowns, large areas of the state were left without an abortion care provider, including most of West Texas and the entire Lower Rio Grande Valley (LRGV).

Women in the Lower Rio Grande Valley represent a particularly vulnerable population since this area has higher levels of poverty than the rest of the state, and women would have to travel at least 150 miles to the nearest clinic; undocumented immigrants in the LRGV faced particular obstacles to access services further north since they would need to pass border patrol stations (Grossman et al., 2014, p. 497).

Fuentes et al. (2016) found that after HB2 went into effect, women in the areas where clinics had closed (especially West Texas and the LRGV) spent more time and money to access abortion care. Expenses included increased spending on transportation, childcare, hotel stays, and missed workdays. In addition, women were required to ask for more help than if there had been a local provider, sharing their abortion decision and compromising their privacy in the

process. Women also reported feeling “confusion, fear, and frustration” (Fuentes et al., 2016, p. 296). Some women explored options for self-inducing abortion, while others saw no option but to continue their pregnancies. In summarizing their research on abortion safety, Upadhyay et al. (2015) concluded,

State legislatures have passed regulations such as ambulatory surgical center requirements...and hospital admitting privileges...with the stated intent to increase safety. Given that in practice their ultimate effect often is the closure of abortion facilities, there is a need to consider the public health effect of these policies, weighing any theoretical incremental reduction in patient risk that may occur against any increases in risk that may occur with reduced access to abortion care (p.182).

### **Conceptual Framework**

Benevolent sexism is one part of Ambivalent Sexism Theory proposed by Glick and Fiske (1996) to explain the multidimensional nature of sexism as a form of prejudice that includes both negative and positive attitudes toward women. I chose to use benevolent sexism as a conceptual framework because the associated attitudes and actions are often not recognized as sexism. As a result, it is possible that decisions made within policy-making bodies, such as legislatures or courts may not be identified as openly sexist as long as they appear at first glance to promote a positive view of women as valued members of society. The organizing principles of benevolent sexism, including protective paternalism, complementary gender differentiation, and heterosexual intimacy were used as the lens through which to collect and analyze the qualitative data in this case study.

## Methods

### Sample

The sample for the case study includes one law, Texas HB2, passed during the 83<sup>rd</sup> Second Called Session of the Texas state legislature in 2013. This bill was selected as the subject of the case study because it represents a recently-adjudicated TRAP law, a type of legislation increasingly used by states over the past two decades to restrict women's access to abortion. In June 2016 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled on the constitutionality of HB2 in the case *Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt*, striking down some of the most restrictive provisions common to TRAP laws – those requiring physicians to have hospital admitting privileges and clinics to meet ASC requirements (Guttmacher Institute, 2016b). The outcomes of this particular legislation and its resulting court case have a significant effect on current and future legislation related to women's reproductive health and freedom.

### Data Collection

Legislative documents examined for the case study included the bill text of HB2, House and Senate bill analyses, House and Senate Journals reflecting legislative debates and actions on the bill, the Texas Register (a journal of state agency rulemaking), and press releases from the offices of the Governor and Lieutenant Governor of Texas. Court documents examined for the case study included civil actions, appeals, motions filed, and opinions from the District Court, Court of Appeals, and U.S. Supreme Court (SCOTUS). In regard to the SCOTUS proceedings, documents examined included briefs for the petitioners (*Whole Woman's Health et al.*), briefs for the respondents (the state of Texas represented by the Commissioner of the Department of State Health Services), a transcript of the oral arguments, and several amicus briefs. Amicus briefs examined for this study were limited to those submitted by government entities, such as



cities, states, legislators, governors, lieutenant governors, and the U.S. government. These documents were retrieved through the websites of the Texas State Legislature, the Legislative Reference Library of Texas, the American Bar Association, the U.S. Supreme Court, and the SCOTUS blog.

### **Data Analysis**

Each document collected as a part of the case study was read for content using a framework for content analysis based on language indicative of Glick and Fiske's (1996) benevolent sexist constructs of protective paternalism, complementary gender differentiation, and heterosexual intimacy (see Appendix). This framework identified wording or themes specific to the bill that may fit under each construct with the recognition that other, unanticipated themes may emerge from the data. All documents were reviewed initially for language suggesting an orientation to one or more of these benevolent sexist constructs. Documents that contained language indicative of benevolent sexism were read through twice more and selectively coded based on the framework. Words and phrases indicative of benevolent sexism were copied into a separate document according to which construct they fit into, then manually sorted based on emergent themes.

Because the broader context of these documents was important in determining the presence of benevolent sexist ideology, I applied critical discourse analysis (CDA) in my examination of the documents. Vaara and Tienari (2012) state that CDA

focuses on the role played by language in the construction of power relationships and reproduction of domination in social and societal life... CDA attempts to make visible taken-for-granted assumptions that easily pass unnoticed in more traditional analyses...

[The] researcher is not a ‘neutral observer’ but his or her role is to acknowledge a particular kind of (critical) perspective (p. 246).

Because benevolent sexist attitudes are often perceived as a positive view of women, a critical analysis of these documents within their context was necessary to identify oppressive power structures maintained by certain words or phrases.

Following data collection, the documents were organized using an Excel spreadsheet that included the title, date, and source. Electronic and physical databases of the data sources were created to preserve the sources, facilitate a chain of evidence, and allow for additional analysis in the future (Yin, 2014).

### **Strengths and Limitations**

Strengths of this research included the single-case study design and use of primary source documents in data collection. Yin (2014) states that the case study allows the researcher to explore “a contemporary phenomenon in-depth and within its real-world context,” especially when the “boundaries between the phenomenon and the context” (p. 16) are unclear. Because this research applies benevolent sexism in a new way, the use of case study methodology provided an easily-defined, time-bound sample for this exploratory analysis. Using primary source documents offered a unique, unfiltered glimpse into the language used by government entities to discuss the introduction, passage, and legal defense of HB2 as a TRAP law.

While I identified the case study methodology as a strength of this study, some researchers question the rigor and relevance of the case study as a form of empirical inquiry (Yin, 2014). In addition, case studies typically rely on multiple types of data sources such as documents, interviews, archival records, direct observations, participant observations, and physical artifacts to triangulate the findings (Yin, 2014). Due to time and resource constraints, I

utilized only publicly-available documents that were accessible via internet. Though the narrower focus is a limitation of this particular study, it also provides opportunities for future research on this topic.

### **Results**

Using the case study method and benevolent sexism as a conceptual framework I examined the introduction, passage, and subsequent legal defense of Texas HB2. The final sample for this study included 33 documents and 1,436 pages of information. The data sources represented a variety of documents. I treated each type of document as an equally-valuable representation of governmental attitudes about HB2 and the subsequent court cases. The amicus briefs served as a particularly rich source of data where government-affiliated “friends of the court” justified their positions in support of or against HB2. The data indicated a strong orientation of protective paternalism, including two significant themes under that construct. Language indicative of complementary gender differentiation was evident to a lesser extent and also included two themes. I did not identify any language representing heterosexual intimacy.

#### **Protective Paternalism**

Protective paternalism is the assumption that women must be protected by stronger, more powerful members of society. This responsibility is often assumed by men, but in the case of HB2 the Texas state legislature assumed the role of protector. Protective paternalism was the most prevalent construct of benevolent sexism evidenced in the data, indicated primarily by language about the potential effect of the law and the legislature’s stated purpose for its introduction.

The Texas Legislature has taken specific interest in the health of women, as evidenced by a well-established legislative record (Brief for bipartisan, 2016, p. 8).

[The regulations] are justified by the state on the same ground, protection of the safety of women seeking abortions (*Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt*, 2016, p.).

**The State has the right to protect women.** One of the primary themes under the construct of protective paternalism identified the state's right to legislate in cases of perceived threats to citizen safety. In this case, abortion procedures and abortion providers were identified as threats to Texas women.

The state has a legitimate interest in seeing to it that abortion, like any other medical procedure, is performed under circumstances that insure maximum safety for the patient (*Whole Woman's Health v. Cole*, 2015, p. 32).

...House Bill 2 is the result of the Legislature's rightful concern to protect the health of Texas women (Brief for bipartisan, 2016, p. 14).

'It is up to the State, it's up to us, to intervene... [and] protect [women], and they're not being protected properly' (Brief for bipartisan, 2016, p. 14).

This argument continued in assertions that the State also has the right to legislate in matters of scientific or medical uncertainty, even when challenged as to whether the legislation in question will achieve any helpful outcome.

Clearly, when professionals within the medical community disagree, the State is free to enact regulations aimed at protecting patient health, and the State is not required to prove that the resulting regulations will achieve the maximum safety it seeks (Brief for more, 2016, p. 17).

In other words, deference to the state is appropriate even when a challenger alleges that a law is not based upon scientific fact (Brief for more, 2016, p. 14).

The Texas legislature acted well within its broad discretion when it responded to considerable medical and scientific uncertainty by giving first priority to client safety (Brief of amici, 2016, p. 13).

In addition, those speaking to the issue of state's rights indicated that the courts should not question a state's actions, as long as the state can articulate a clear connection between the legislation and the state's right to protect the health and safety of its citizens.

At no point has the court required a state to prove whether an abortion regulation 'actually serve[s] the government's interest in promoting health' (Brief for more, 2016, p. 14).

The Court owes substantial deference to the Texas Legislature's judgment on this quintessentially legislative issue. The health and safety regulations at issue here fall comfortably within the broad bounds of legislative discretion that this Court's cases recognize (Brief of amici, 2016, p. 2-3).

**Women need protection from "bad players."** A second significant theme that emerged under the construct of protective paternalism was the assertion that women need protection from "bad players," such as doctors and clinics who commit egregious harm in their practices of abortion. According to proponents of HB2, such harm is a result of lax regulation of abortion practices. Proponents of HB2 repeatedly cited the case of Kermit Gosnell, a Philadelphia abortion provider convicted in May 2013 of three counts of murder and one count of involuntary manslaughter in the deaths of three infants and one woman (Chapman, 2015). Gosnell's clinic was described as a "house of horrors" where untrained staff overdosed women with dangerous drugs, unsterilized surgical instruments spread venereal diseases, and fetal remains were stored haphazardly throughout the clinic. Gosnell's clinic had not been inspected in more than 16 years,

despite existing state regulations and repeated complaints (Chapman, 2015). The Gosnell case was used repeatedly as a justification for implementing the admitting privileges and ASC requirements in HB2:

Justice Kagan, this bill was passed in the wake of the Kermit Gosnell scandal that prompted Texas and many other States to reexamine their abortion regulations (Transcript of oral argument, 2016, p. 64).

We've witnessed far too many stories – from Philadelphia to Houston and elsewhere – about reckless doctors performing abortions in horrific conditions. We've heard stories about women getting sick – even dying – after treatment at such places (Office of the Governor Rick Perry, 2013, para. 11-12).

Higher standards could prevent the occurrence of a situation in Texas like the one recently exposed in Philadelphia, in which Dr. Kermit Gosnell was convicted of murder after killing babies who were born alive. A patient also died at that substandard clinic (Texas House Research Organization, 2013, p. 10).

The Gosnell case is an extreme example that proponents of HB2 used it as a springboard to generalize their concerns about women's health and safety to all abortion providers. Some even suggested that doctors who perform abortions are—by virtue of their chosen vocation—more likely to engage in harmful practices.

[T]he State offered expert testimony that [the admitting privileges] requirement leads to greater continuity of care and 'assures peer-review of abortion providers...thereby protecting patients from less-than-qualified providers' (Whole Woman's Health v. Cole, 2015, p. 23).

Many states have enacted laws like House Bill 2 ('HB2') to improve the standard of care at abortion clinics, particularly at less-reputable clinics that operate at the margins of medical practice (Brief of the governors, 2016, p. 2).

Further, Dr. Gosnell's abortion practice cannot be dismissed as an isolated example of a single bad doctor (Brief of amici, 2016, p. 16).

Many people...reasonably believe that abortion doctors are more prone to commit Gosnell-like crimes than doctors engaged in the healing arts (Brief for the state, 2016, p. 13).

### **Complementary Gender Differentiation**

Complementary gender differentiation values women as gentle and nurturing, complementing men who are expected to be tough and stoic. The construct of complementary gender differentiation was less-prominent, but still present in the data. Two primary themes related to women in "traditional" roles emerged under the construct of complementary gender differentiation.

**Women are emotional.** In addition to the admitting privileges and ASC requirements, HB2 also included a ban on abortions performed after 20 weeks' gestation. The bill text articulated an exception based on threats to the physical health of the pregnant woman, but explicitly excluded threats to her psychological health. The House Research Organization gave the following justification for this exclusion:

It would not be appropriate to make exceptions [to the 20-week ban] based on subjective, and possibly inaccurate, evaluations of a pregnant woman's mental state, which could be influenced by hormonal mood swings that many women experience at various times during pregnancy (Texas House Research Organization, 2013, p. 9).

This argument indicates that not only is a pregnant woman's physical health more valuable than her mental health, but she cannot be trusted to accurately identify serious threats to her own psychological well-being. One expert witness for the State corroborated the assumption that when dealing with difficult reproductive health issues, women are unable to make informed decisions due to being overcome with emotion.

Dr Ingrid Skop testified: 'In my experience a lot of these young girls, they're scared.

They come away from the abortion. They don't know what procedure they had and they don't know who the doctor was. And so it's very, very difficult to get a good history out of them' (Brief for Respondent, 2016, p. 34).

**Women are mothers/vessels.** To a person or group that harbors benevolent sexist ideologies, there is no greater role for a woman than being a mother. In turn conversations about the issue of abortion would naturally express a preference for women as mothers. Language indicative of this preference was evident in several of the amicus briefs.

Throughout pregnancy the State may take measures to ensure that the woman's choice is informed, and measures designed to advance this interest will not be invalidated as long as their purpose is to persuade the woman to choose childbirth over abortion (Brief for more, 2016, p. 12).

In fact, the amicus brief submitted by the state of Wisconsin quoted Governor Scott Walker expressing a belief that government should legislate to ensure motherhood, even at the expense of a woman's life.

Governor [Scott] Walker before he withdrew from the Presidential competition said that he thought abortion should be forbidden even if the mother dies as a result of not having an abortion (Brief for the state, 2016, p. 11).



In some cases, discourse completely depersonalized women, reducing the person and her circumstances to mere organs tasked with carrying a fetus.

The pregnant uterus with higher risks should only be treated in an ASC or hospital setting where the necessary additional testing or surgery to assess and treat for complications can be safely accomplished (Brief for Respondent, 2016, p. 38).

### **Discussion**

Using the single-case study method and benevolent sexism as a conceptual framework, I examined the introduction, passage, and subsequent legal defense of Texas HB2, “An act relating to the regulation of abortion procedures, providers, and facilities; providing penalties” (H.B. 2, 2013, p. 1). HB2 was passed by the 83<sup>rd</sup> Texas State Legislature in 2013 and ruled on by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2016 in the case *Whole Woman’s Health v. Hellerstedt*. Data sources included primary source legislative and court documents.

Through Critical Discourse Analysis, I identified language indicative of the benevolent sexist constructs of protective paternalism and complementary gender differentiation. Two themes identified under protective paternalism were: the state has a right to protect women and women deserve protection from “bad players.” The former invoked the state’s right to legislate against perceived threats to citizen safety, like abortion procedures and providers. Proponents of HB2 argued that the State can legislate cases of medical or scientific uncertainty and that courts should not question these actions as long as the State can articulate a clear connection to its interest in citizen safety. Women deserving protection is a theme based on multiple references to the criminal case of Kermit Gosnell, a Pennsylvania abortion provider who operated a sub-standard clinic until convicted of murder. This case was used repeatedly as justification for increasing regulations on abortion clinics and providers, even though the situation reflected a

lack of enforcement, not a lack of regulation. Concerns about Gosnell were generalized to all abortion providers, stoking fear of future atrocities.

The construct of complementary gender differentiation was less prominent but still present in the data and included two themes: women are emotional and women are mothers/vessels. The former included the presumed instability of pregnant women's emotions as a justification for excluding psychological health as an exception to a 20-week abortion ban. In addition, the admitting privileges requirement was supported by expert testimony stating women who experience post-abortion complications are too emotional to give necessary information to ER physicians. Finally, the women as mothers theme speaks to a core belief of complementary gender differentiation, that women are most valuable in traditional roles, especially as mothers. Data indicated an inclination to persuade women to choose motherhood, even at the expense of their own lives. One statement referred only to a "pregnant uterus" as the target of treatment, ignoring the woman's agency as a human being deserving of treatment appropriate to her unique context.

The results of this case study indicate that language reflecting protective paternalism and complimentary gender differentiation was used in the context of policy-making to justify restricting women's access to pre-viability abortion, a constitutionally-protected right. This conclusion is consistent with previous findings that individuals who expressed beliefs of benevolent sexism were willing to restrict women's freedoms for the sake of safety. The assertion that a particular law would protect women is a convincing argument, especially when the dominant culture promotes a view of women as dependent and incapable of making informed choices.

For these reasons, the conceptual framework of benevolent sexism was a strength of this study. Without the lenses of protective paternalism and complementary gender differentiation, the discourse of safety and motherhood surrounding HB2 may be accepted at face-value by those who legitimately want to ensure quality healthcare for women. Those who are uncomfortable with restricting women's rights to keep women safe may struggle to articulate the nature of their concerns about seemingly reasonable policy efforts. Benevolent sexism provides a language to use in confronting these efforts.

I chose a policy related to abortion as the subject of this case study due to its currency in on-going legislative and judicial efforts. However, the complex nature of abortion itself as a divisive and difficult issue is a potential limitation of this study. Readers may approach this data with their own beliefs about abortion, influencing their consideration of the impact of benevolent sexism in policy-making. This shows a need for future studies using the framework of benevolent sexism to explore other social policies that affect the rights and freedoms of women.

My intent with this research was to introduce possible interpretations of this particular legislative effort and consider the question of "why." If there was no scientific evidence indicating the need for or benefit of admitting privileges and ASC requirements, it is unclear why these provisions were introduced. In their legitimate desire to prevent harm to women seeking abortions, legislators and other government entities supporting the bill may have responded in a knee-jerk fashion to the case of Kermit Gosnell. An in-depth examination of Texas' existing abortion regulations and research on the safety of the abortion procedures may have led to a more informed course of action than what was undertaken. U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ginsberg asked this very question during oral arguments, suggesting that HB2 is perhaps a solution in search of a problem.

But what is the legitimate interest in protecting [women's] health? What evidence is there that...the prior law was not sufficiently protective of the women's health? As I understand it, this is one of the lowest risk procedures, and you give a horrible [example] from Pennsylvania, but absolutely nothing from Texas... (Transcript of oral argument, 2016, p. 53).

Another possibility is that in the case of HB2, benevolent sexism actually served as the instrument of an anti-choice agenda. In its state-by-state legal guide *Defending Life 2013*, the policy group Americans United for Life (2013) recommended that legislators focus on “commonsense legislation that the majority of Americans support” (p. x) in order to achieve their ultimate goal of reversing *Roe v. Wade*. Admitting privileges for abortion providers and ASC requirements for abortion clinics are two of the strategies outlined in the guide, including sample language for state legislators who wish to draft bills with these provisions. The following year Texas Governor Rick Perry penned a greeting for *Defending Life 2014* (Americans United for Life, 2014) declaring victory for the anti-choice movement through the passage of HB2. Finally, during a floor debate in the Texas House of Representatives a legislator was quoted as saying,

I can't wait for two weeks from now when this Bill makes it to the governor's desk and we can finally stop saying this is about women's health, and talk about what it is, which is shutting down abortion clinics. I can't wait to go back to my constituents and be able to say that' (House Journal, 2013, p. 134-135).

Reproductive choice continues to be an important area of research and policy analysis. Advocates must remain vigilant in their critical consideration of language used by proponents of legislation that seeks to limit the freedom of any group, including women. Through challenging discourse and processes based on the benevolent sexist constructs of protective paternalism, complementary gender differentiation, and heterosexual intimacy, we can become more effective

advocates for social policies based on scientific fact and respect for the constitutional rights of all persons.

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Publications.

**Appendix**

FRAMEWORK FOR CONTENT ANALYSIS – BENEVOLENT SEXISM

Document Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ (1<sup>st</sup> Review)

\_\_\_\_\_ (2<sup>nd</sup> Review)

\_\_\_\_\_ (3<sup>rd</sup> Review)

Does this document contain wording indicative of the following:

Themes of Protective Paternalism

Safety –

Protecting women’s physical health –

Protecting women’s emotional health –

Other –

Themes of Complementary Gender Differentiation

Women as emotional –

Women as mothers –

Other –

Themes of Heterosexual Intimacy

Women as wives of men –

Women as sexual partners of men –

Other –

Benevolent Sexism in Reproductive Health Policy:

*Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt*

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## Abstract

This presentation examined how the Supreme Court case *Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt* (2016) and the underlying policy Texas House Bill 2 (2013) affected women's access to reproductive health services. Using the single-case study method, I investigated these legislative actions and responses through the theoretical lens of benevolent sexism. Benevolent sexism values women in traditional roles as caregivers and nurturers who require protection by men or other, more powerful entities. Because these attitudes are perceived as caring for women, they are difficult to challenge in the public sphere. Using critical discourse analysis to examine primary source documents, I identified four main themes: states have the right to protect women, women need protection from "bad players," women are emotional, and women are mothers/vessels. Results indicated that language indicative of benevolent sexism was used to justify restricting women's access to the Constitutionally-protected right of pre-viability abortion. Social workers can address this issue by challenging language and thought processes based on benevolent sexism; advocating for policies based on scientific evidence rather than societal conventions of the dominant group; and ensuring that social policies respect the constitutional rights of all persons, regardless of gender.

Keywords: benevolent sexism, reproductive health, policy, case study, abortion

Benevolent Sexism in Reproductive Health Policy: *Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt*

The following e-poster presentation was given at the Council on Social Work Education Annual Program Meeting “Educating for the Social Work Grand Challenges” in Dallas, Texas on Friday, October 20, 2017. The presentation addressed the 12<sup>th</sup> grand challenge, “achieve equal opportunity and justice” by outlining the conceptual framework of benevolent sexism, results from the case study research discussed in Product Two of the banded dissertation, and implications for social work practice. The presentation engaged social workers and social work educators in discussion about benevolent sexism and its use for public policy analysis.

**Benevolent Sexism in Reproductive Health Policy:**  
*Whole Woman’s Health v. Hellerstedt*  
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OVERVIEW	THE FRAMEWORK: BENEVOLENT SEXISM
<p>This case study applies the framework of benevolent sexism to the 2016 U.S. Supreme Court case <i>Whole Woman’s Health v. Hellerstedt</i> about targeted regulation of abortion providers. Benevolent sexism is characterized by protecting women in “traditional” roles, thereby impinging on their health and freedom.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>GRAND CHALLENGE</b>  <b>Achieve Equal Opportunity and Justice</b></p>	<p>Benevolent sexism (Glick &amp; Fiske, 1996) is characterized by beliefs that fall into three categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protective Paternalism – stronger, more powerful members of society (often men) must protect women.</li> <li>• Complementary Gender Differentiation – women are valued as gentle and nurturing, primarily in their roles as mothers, caregivers, and wives</li> <li>• Heterosexual Intimacy – women are idealized as sexual objects for fulfillment of men’s physical and psychological needs</li> </ul>
METHODS	TEXAS HB 2 & WHOLE WOMAN’S HEALTH v. HELLERSTEDT
<p>This case study used critical discourse analysis (Vaara &amp; Tienari, 2012) to examine qualitative data from primary sources related to HB2 and <i>Whole Woman’s Health v. Hellerstedt</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HB2 Bill Text</li> <li>• House &amp; Senate Journals, Reports</li> <li>• Texas Dept. of State Health Services Documents</li> <li>• Amicus Briefs (Government Entities)</li> <li>• Civil Actions &amp; Filed Motions</li> <li>• Court Opinions (District Ct, Ct of Appeals, SCOTUS)</li> </ul>	<p>Texas House Bill 2 (HB2) – passed July 12, 2013</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doctors who perform abortions must have hospital admitting privileges within 30 miles of clinic</li> <li>• Abortion clinics must conform to same standards as ambulatory surgical centers (ASCs)</li> </ul> <p><i>Whole Woman’s Health v. Hellerstedt</i> – decided June 27, 2016</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Admitting privileges and ASC requirements offer minimal health benefits and place substantial obstacles in path of women seeking abortions</li> </ul>



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**NOTES:**

Chose to research this case as example of benevolent sexism due to its currency and because premise of case (HB2 is needed to ensure women’s safety) not supported by evidence. If not based on evidence, what was it based on?

May need to clarify definition and concepts of benevolent sexism for attendees, compare to hostile sexism (gender-based violence, catcalls, etc.)

**Benevolent Sexism in Reproductive Health Policy:**  
*Whole Woman’s Health v. Hellerstedt*  
 Amanda Greubel, MSW, LMSW  
 St. Catherine University-University of St. Thomas – St. Paul, MN

Themes of PROTECTIVE PATERNALISM	Themes of COMPLIMENTARY GENDER DIFFERENTIATION
<p><b>THE STATE HAS A RIGHT TO PROTECT WOMEN</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “[T]he State is free to enact regulations aimed at protecting patient health, and the State is not required to prove that the resulting regulations will achieve the maximum safety it seeks.” (Brief for more than 450, 2016, p. 17)</li> <li>• “Senator Bob Duell...concluded, ‘It is up to the State, it’s up to us, to intervene...[and] protect [women], and they’re not being protected properly.’” (Brief for Bipartisan and Bicameral, 2016, p. 14)</li> </ul> <p><b>WOMEN NEED PROTECTION FROM “BAD PLAYERS”</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Higher standards could prevent the occurrence of a situation in Texas like the one recently exposed in Philadelphia, in which Dr. Kermit Gosnell was convicted of murder after killing babies who were born alive.” (Tex. House Research Organization, 2013, p. 10)</li> <li>• “Many people...reasonably believe that abortion doctors are more prone to commit Gosnell-like crimes than doctors engaged in the healing arts.” (Brief for State of WI, 2016, p. 13)</li> <li>• Dr. Gosnell’s abortion practice cannot be dismissed as an isolated example of a single bad doctor.” (Brief of amici curiae, 2016, p. 16)</li> </ul>	<p><b>WOMEN ARE EMOTIONAL</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “It would not be appropriate to make exceptions [to the 20-week abortion ban] based on subjective, and possibly inaccurate, evaluations of a pregnant woman’s mental state, which could be influenced by hormonal mood swings that many women experience at various times during pregnancy.” (Tex. House Research Organization, 2013, p. 9)</li> <li>• “Dr. Ingrid Skop testified: ‘In my experience a lot of these young girls, they’re scared. They come away from the abortion. They don’t know what procedure they had and they don’t know who the doctor was. And so it’s very, very difficult to get a good history out of them.’” (Brief for Respondent, 2016, p. 34)</li> </ul> <p><b>WOMEN ARE MOTHERS/VESSELS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Governor [Scott] Walker... said that he thought abortion should be forbidden even if the mother dies as a result of not having an abortion.” (Brief for State of WI, 2016, p. 11)</li> <li>• “The pregnant uterus with higher risks should only be treated in an ASC or hospital setting where the necessary additional testing or surgery to assess and treat for complications can be safely accomplished.” (Brief for Respondent, 2016, p. 38)</li> </ul>

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graph LR
    A[Benevolent Sexism] --> B[Protective Paternalism]
    A --> C[Comp Gender Differentiation]
    B --> D[State Has a Right to Protect]
    B --> E[Protection from "Bad Players"]
    C --> F[Women Are Emotional]
    C --> G[Women Are Mothers/Vessels]
    
```

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**NOTES:**

Themes of protective paternalism (“State has a right” and “Women need protection”) were most frequent and prominent in primary documents. Themes of complimentary gender differentiation (“Women are emotional” and “Women are mothers/vessels”) important to identify ways decision-makers (primarily men) made women seeking abortion the “other” to justify restricting freedoms.



## Benevolent Sexism in Reproductive Health Policy:

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## CONCLUSIONS

Results of this case study indicate that benevolent sexist attitudes of protective paternalism and complimentary gender differentiation were used in an effort to justify restricting women's access to the Constitutionally-protected right to pre-viability abortion.

**“I can't wait for two weeks from now when this Bill makes it to the governor's desk and we can finally stop saying this is about women's health, and talk about what it is, which is shutting down abortion clinics.”**

(H. Journal, 2013, p. 134-135)



## IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

Benevolent sexist attitudes are interpreted as subjectively-positive views of women. They are difficult to articulate and rarely challenged. Social workers can:

- Identify and challenge language/thought processes indicative of benevolent sexist attitudes
- Advocate for social policies based on scientific fact, rather than on cultural/historical traditions or beliefs of the dominant group
- Ensure that social policies respect the Constitutional rights of ALL persons, regardless of justification for restrictions

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## NOTES:

Why is this important for social workers?

Now illegal and socially unacceptable to openly denigrate or discriminate against women. Sexist attitudes have not gone away, have gone “underground.” Benevolent sexism frequently interpreted as positive attitude toward women – chivalry, desire to protect, putting women on “pedestal.” Social workers need to identify and confront these attitudes for what they are: more socially-acceptable way to keep women in traditional roles and limit their freedoms.

Why now?

States continue to pass laws restricting access to abortion. HB2 is example of a newer strategy called “Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers” (TRAP) - restricts access by closing abortion clinics. Those advocating TRAP rely on concern for women's safety as a justification for these policies, despite evidence that abortion is extremely safe, low-risk medical procedure. If enforced properly, current regulations are sufficient. Social workers able to recognize and articulate these ideologies and strategies in order to effectively challenge them.

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## NOTES:

References are mostly primary source materials – policy, legislative memos/reports, court opinions, amicus briefs.

### **Feedback from Conference Attendees**

The feedback I received from attendees at the ePoster session was supportive of the research, with brief comments such as “I love this,” “It’s so obvious,” and “This is so aggravating.” One attendee discussed the implications of benevolent sexism in welfare policy and reform. Another person spoke about the manifestations of benevolent sexism in the juvenile justice system, where teen girls who run away are then imprisoned for their own “protection.”

One man in attendance asked me, “How does it make you feel to talk about this?” I was surprised to be asked about my feelings in this type of professional setting. In hindsight, I see this question itself as a manifestation of benevolent sexism. Because I am a woman and women are presumed to be more emotional than analytical, this man felt it was appropriate to focus on my emotions rather than my research.