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Does Manipulating Source Gender Predict a Person's Open-Mindedness as a Function of Sexism?

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DOES MANIPULATING SOURCE GENDER PREDICT A PERSON'S

OPEN-MINDEDNESS AS A FUNCTION OF SEXISM?

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Dedicated to my graduate friends and my family back in Texas.
Thank you for believing in me.

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ABSTRACT

The present research examines whether Communication Source Gender influences a message recipients' level of Open-Minded Cognition, and whether Ambivalent Sexism moderates this effect. Participants were asked to think of themselves as part of a military panel which considers proposals to military spending. Then after reading a proposal from either Cassandra Smith or David Smith, participants were asked to indicate whether they would be open to hearing more from the author. Participants were then instructed to complete the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick & Fiske, 1996). In total there were 395 participants in this study. Results show that there was no main effect of Source Gender on Ambivalent Sexism, Ambivalent Sexism was negatively related to Open-Mindedness. Although not achieving significance, there was a borderline interaction between Ambivalent Sexism and Source Gender that matched the predicted pattern. .

THESIS

DOES MANIPULATING SOURCE GENDER PREDICT A PERSON'S

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Open-Minded Cognition is a bipolar psychological continuum ranging from open-mindedness, or a willingness to consider varying perspectives, ideas, opinion etc., and closed-minded or dogmatic thinking where individuals tend to lean towards confirmatory information (Price et al, 2015). Individuals who are open-minded tend to consider a variety of viewpoints, competing perspectives, and process information in an unbiased manner. Individuals with dogmatic or closed-minded cognitive styles are characterized by confirmatory bias and tend to process information in a way that reinforces existing opinions or expectations.

Open-Minded Cognition measures contain many important characteristics (Price et al, 2015). The first is that open-minded cognition measures assess a tendency to select, interpret, or elaborate upon information in either a biased or unbiased manner. A second is that general, domain-specific, and situations specific measures of open-minded cognition possess virtually identical item content and factor structure. This enables the researcher to compare these different scales while holding the item content constant. In this study we used the Situation-Specific Open-Minded Cognition scale which measures how open minded a person is when presented with a specific situation. Other "domain-specific" scales that assess open-minded cognition assess Political Open-Mindedness and Religious Open-Mindedness involve broader categories of situations. Importantly, all open-minded cognition scales have been validated using a statistical

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procedure that controls from agreement (acquiescence) bias, and that yields balanced scales possessing an equal number of open and closed items on the scale. In addition, all of the scales are short, and can be administered in research studies that require a succinct method of measurement.

Researchers understand the need to acknowledge the power of the situation and that an individual may be open-minded when listening to one subject but then be closed-minded when listening to another topic. Open-mindedness can vary as a function of message tenability (Ottati et al., 2021). It can also vary as a function of the message recipient's view of the communication source, such as someone more liberal not being open-minded by topics discussed on Fox News. Open-mindedness can be influenced by appraisal of the specific communication topic, such as someone who is vehemently against the death penalty listening to a speech about expanding it, and other situational conditions (Wilson et al., 2015). It is difficult to feel open-minded about strongly held beliefs (Riggs, 2010).

Situational threat is also an important aspect of situational variation in open-mindedness and dogmatism, as previous work demonstrates that threatening conditions reduce open-mindedness and increases dogmatism (Val et al, 2012). If Black Americans feel threatened by police because of the profession's bias towards arresting more Black citizens proportionally than white citizens, then they will be less inclined to be open-minded with regard to a communication that involves expanding the police budget, or any topic with police as a source.

Open-minded cognition addresses aspects of social psychology having to do with impression formation and attitudes, which can be biased when individuals form interpretations of information (Wyer & Srull, 1979). It also relates to another social psychology subject,

stereotyping, which can elicit biases when individuals selectively process information about a group member (Bodenhausen, 1998). Because stereotyping, prejudice, bias, and an absence of open-mindedness are inter-related; it is logical to consider the link between Open-Mindedness and Ambivalent Sexism- a form of prejudice against females.

Ambivalent Sexism is a concept that encompasses two sets of sexist attitudes, Hostile sexism, and Benevolent sexism (Glick & Frisk, 1996). Hostile sexism involves a tendency to perceive women as competitors against men's power and who are willing to use devious tactics to do so (Hammond & Overall, 2013). Hostile sexism has been and continues to be a prevalent form of sexism. Around 42% of women are still discriminated against in places of employment, 35% say they have been victims of sexual harassment, and they are viewed less favorably than their male coworkers and can be overlooked for advancement opportunities (Parker & Funk, 2020). In the medical setting, women are often second guessed and are not believed by medical personnel about any pain or symptoms they are experiencing (McMurray et al, 1991). At home, women deal with hostile sexism in the form of physical and emotional abuse from their partners.

A common complaint of women in the workplace is that the ideas they present are shut down quickly, but if a male colleague presents the same idea they are met with praise and acceptance (Parker & Funk, 2020). This seems to be a manifestation of a dogmatic cognitive style, but because I believe the force behind this phenomenon is sexism, the Situation Specific Scale must be used. In this situation, the lack of open-mindedness is that a woman is presenting the ideas, not the ideas themselves, which is why in the following study we have both a female and male condition with the same excerpt and position title.

Benevolent Sexism is defined as a set of interrelated attitudes toward women that are sexist in terms of viewing women stereotypically in restricted roles, such as homemaker or caregiver, but that are subjectively positive in feeling tone (for the perceiver) and also tend to elicit behaviors typically categorized as prosocial or intimacy seeking (Glick & Frisk, 1996). Benevolent sexism is not seen as a good thing, though sexist individuals would attribute these behaviors as such. The positive feelings that a someone high in Benevolent Sexism may experience towards women are rooted in traditional stereotyping where women are viewed as submissive and docile, and men are viewed as dominant. The consequences of these ideas are damaging, as they stifle women's independence in society and ultimately deny them the rights and benefits that are afforded to men.

Ambivalent Sexist attitudes are detrimental to the mental wellbeing of women. Workplace sexism has been shown to negatively predict mental health and job satisfaction (Bergman & Hallberg, 2002). Other research shows that workplace sexism leads to a reduced sense of belonging in the workplace among women (Richman et al., 2011). In many of these male-dominated industries, women are targets of sexism, and as a consequence feel a reduced sense of belonging and social connections which also leads to poor mental health outcomes (Hagerty, Williams, Coyne, & Early, 1996). The prevalence of these negative outcomes demonstrates a need to fully understand how sexism can manifest, and with this study we attempted to show how sexism can affect how open-minded or dogmatic a person can be with ideas presented by a woman versus the same ideas presented by a man.

Theoretical Hypotheses

The following theoretical hypotheses refer to an experimental situation in which participants are exposed to a communication that pertains to a "male topic", namely, a communication topic that is traditionally viewed as requiring a male perspective to fully understand (i.e., military defense). Gender of the communication source will be manipulated with the source being male in one condition, but female in the other condition.

Hypothesis 1: Participants will be more open minded in the Male Source than in the Female Source condition.

Hypothesis 2a (Cross-Over Interaction): The participants who are higher in sexism will be more open-minded in the male source condition than those in the female source condition. Due to over-correction bias, the reverse of this effect will take place among low sexism participants.

Hypothesis 2b (Knock-Out Interaction): Alternatively, whereas high sexism participants will be more open-minded toward the male than female source, this effect will simply be eliminated for low sexism participants.

The above hypotheses are based on several frameworks. The first of those frameworks is the idea that a person who is high in sexism will be less open-minded when presented with information about a traditionally male topic put forward by a woman. An individual will also be more open-minded to information about a traditionally male topic that is put forward by a man. The reasoning behind this is that those who are sexist continue to hold standards that align with traditional gender roles (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Women are seen as subservient to men, in caretaker positions and are seen as loving and gentle. Men on the other hand are viewed as strong

providers, and defenders of the family. A man having an opinion on a "male topic" (i.e., military spending) would be acceptable to someone with those types of ideologies. However, a woman giving her opinion on the same subject should illicit a different reaction which in this study would translate to being more closed minded on the issue.

The reasoning behind using Ambivalent Sexism versus only Hostile or Benevolent sexism is that both forms are harmful towards women. Moreover, prior research findings do not provide a strong basis for predicting Hostile and Benevolent Sexism will elicit different effect sin the present study. Both forms of sexism may influence Open Mindedness towards a female or male source on a traditionally male oriented topic, because of the way both describe how men view women and their place within society. Hostile sexism is an adversarial view of gender relations and people who ascribe to that ideology believe that women are seeking to control men either through sexuality or feminist ideology. With Benevolent Sexism the perpetrator characterizes women as pure creatures who ought to be protected and supported. In this view the sexist views women as necessary to make a man complete (Glick & Fiske, 2001).

Method

For this study, half of the participants were placed into the "Male Source" Condition and the other half placed into the "Female Source" Condition (Source Gender is a dichotomously manipulated independent variable). Participant Ambivalent Sexism was measured as a continuous independent variable. The data analysis is a regression that tests the main effect of Source Gender and the interaction between the participant's sexism score and Source Gender when predicting the participants' degree of open mindedness. That is, the predictor variables will be Participant Ambivalent Sexism (continuous), Communication Source dichotomous; male,

female), and the interaction between these variables. The dependent variable will be the participant's Situation-Specific Open-Minded Cognition score.

Participants and Sampling

Power analyses focus on the number of participants needed to test the interaction term, as it is likely to possess the smallest predicted effect size. Two Apriori G*Power Analyses (Regression R^2 Increase) were run. The first analysis assumed a small effect size (f2 = .02), 80% Power, and a p-value of .05. This analysis indicated N = 395 participants are needed to test the interaction. The second analysis assumed a medium effect size (f^2 = .15), 80% Power, and a p-value of .05. This second analysis indicated N = 55 participants are needed to test the interaction. Obviously, the larger sample size is more likely to yield a significant interaction effect. The final participant count after bot check removals was N = 387.

Importantly, this study used online participants found on Amazon Mechanical Turk (Mturk) from the USA only. Age range of participants were adults with no restrictions of socioeconomic status or political party affiliation. There was no restriction on the participants race or gender identity as people of all genders can ascribe to sexist views. The decision to use an Mturk sample was made for two reasons. The first being that the COVID-19 pandemic will be very much active at the time of data collection for this study. Any in person data collection would require planning and resources that would not be available to the researcher, and because online data collection is possible for this study design, for the safety and wellbeing of the participants, online data collection was deemed the most logical option.

The second reason that Mturk was used, versus a college student sample at Loyola University of Chicago, is because this student population tends to lean more liberal than those

outside of a university setting. On Mturk, it is more likely that a wide array of political ideologies will be sampled, and therefore the random sample will be more balanced between those who identify as conservative and those who identify as liberal. We did not want a sample that is mostly liberal because, those with liberal ideologies are less likely to interpret the passages differently if one was written by a man and the other a woman. A bot screening manipulation check was added in the middle of the study in the form of an open-ended question. Participants were compensated for their time with $0.75 through the Mturk system.

Procedure

At the beginning of the study, a consent form was given to the participants, letting them know that their responses to this study will remain anonymous. In order to proceed with the study, they needed to accept this consent form. The following page had instructions to the participant as well as a short excerpt about military defense spending. Depending on the condition the participant found themselves in they were either told that the author of the excerpt was David Smith or Cassandra Smith. These names were chosen because they are strongly gendered names, that lend no ambiguity to which gender the author is.

The instructional paragraph asked participants to imagine they are a member of a committee in the military that is in charge of approving the spending budget for every year (See Appendix A for full instruction). Following this was a paragraph that the participant was told is an excerpt detailing changes to military spending (See Appendix A for excerpt). After reading this excerpt, the participants were instructed to complete a Situation Specific Open-Minded Cognition scale to assess how open minded the participant was on considering the source's opinion on the topic of military defense (See Appendix A). As a bot screening technique, the

participants were instructed to fill out an open-ended question describing what the content of the proposal was. If this question was not answered in a coherent manner, the case was deleted from the sample used in the data analysis.

Next, the participant completed a shortened version of the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick and Fiske, 1996). The decision to include this test at the end of the study was made to prevent any priming effect that the participant might have if we put the Sexism test at the beginning of the study. If the researcher were to start the study with the sexism test, that would also clue the participant in on what the study was about and would compel the participants in the Female Source condition to not answer truthfully.

Lastly, participant demographic information was collected (age, gender identity, and race). For a complete copy of the experimental materials, see Appendix A.

Design

Half of the participants were placed into the "Male Source" Condition and the other half was placed into the "Female Source" Condition (Source Gender is a dichotomously manipulated independent variable). Participant Ambivalent Sexism was measured as a continuous independent variable. The data was analyzed using a regression model that includes Participant Ambivalent Sexism, Communication Source, and the interaction between these two variables when predicting Situation-Specific Open-Minded Cognition (dependent measure).

Measures

Ambivalent Sexism Inventory

Participants completed the short version of the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick & Fisk, 1996) which consists of six items each for both Hostile Sexism and Benevolent Sexism.

The participant responds to these by indicating the degree to which they agree or disagree with each statement (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

Situation Specific Open-Minded Cognition

Participants completed the Situation Specific Open-Minded Cognition scale which consists of six items. The participant responded to these items by indicating the degree to which they agree or disagree with each statement in relation to the short paragraph they read (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

Results

First a t-test was performed to see if SSOMC differed when comparing the male source to female source condition. SSOMC scores in the "Male Source" condition (M = 5.42; SD = 1.10) did not differ from SOMC scores in the "Female Source" condition (M = 5.45, SD = 1.03), $t(385)$ = .925, p =.337, d=0.03).

Next, a regression analysis was run to see if Ambivalent Sexism, Source Gender, and the interaction of these two variables to predict Situation-Specific Open-Minded Cognition. Before analyzing the data, Source Gender was centered and Ambivalent Sexism was normalized and divided by 2.0 to create a continuous variable where -.5 equals one standard deviation below the mean, .00 equals that mean, and +.5 equals one standard deviation above the mean. In the regression analyses, Source Gender did not predict SSOMC b = .022, $t(385)$ = .210, p=.834. Ambivalent Sexism was negatively associated with SSOMC, b =-.522, $t(383)$ = -4.888, p <.001. The interaction between Source Gender and Ambivalent Sexism was borderline significant b = .376, $t(383)$ = 1.762, p = .079. Because it was borderline significant, additional analysis was run to estimate simple effects of Source Gender for low (one standard deviation below mean) and

high Ambivalent Sexism participants (See Figure 1). People who are high in sexism (red line in Figure 1) are more open towards the Male Source than the Female Source. People low in sexism (red line in Figure 1) are more open minded towards the Female Source than the Male source. This pattern is most similar to the hypothesis 2a, which predicts opposite effects of Source Gender when comparing high and low Ambivalent Sexism participants.

Figure 1. Centered Ambivalent Sexism Analysis
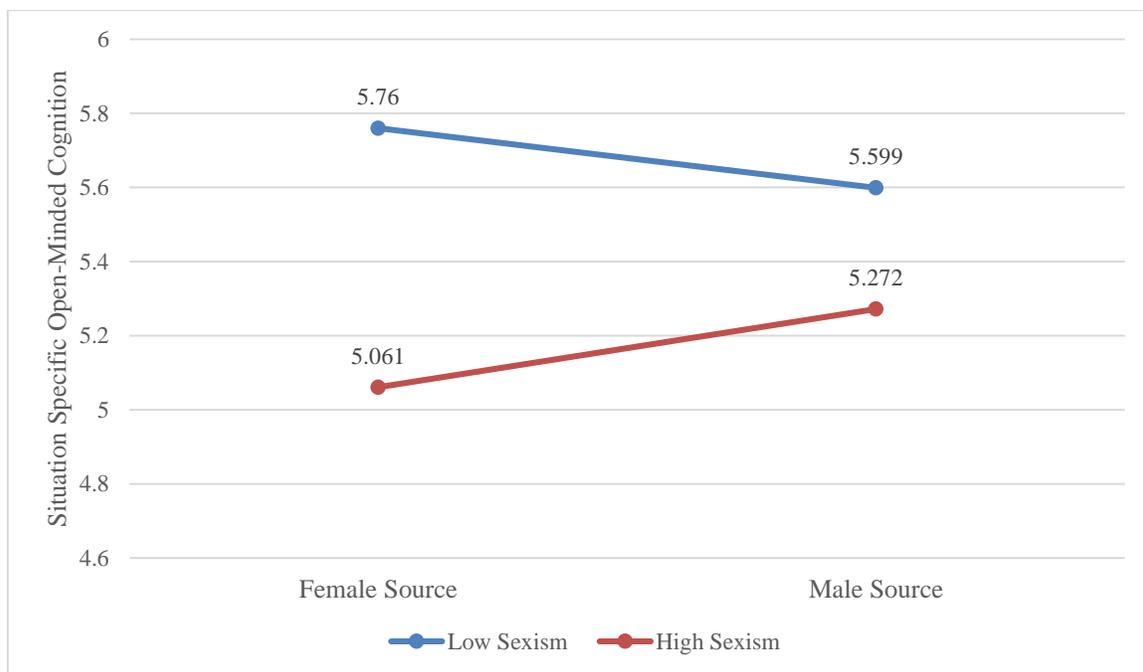
$b=-.166$, SE=.149; t(383)=-1.113, $p=.267$ $b=.210$, SE=.152; t(383)=1.380, $p=.168$

As noted previously, there was no a priori reason to believe different effects would emerge when specifically focusing on and comparing effects elicited by Hostile or Benevolent Sexism. Nevertheless, additional analyses were performed to explore this possibility. Table 1 reveals that the interaction produced by Benevolent and Hostile Sexism were not as strong as the interaction produced when using Ambivalent Sexism in the analysis. Nevertheless, for the sake

of completeness Figures 2 and 3 display the graphed results for Benevolent and Hostile Sexism,

respectively.

| Interaction	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.
Ambivalent Sexism x Source Gender	.376	.214	1.762	.079
Benevolent Sexism x Source Gender	.323	.218	1.481	.139
Hostile Sexism x Source Gender	.328	.214	1.533	.126

Table 1. Regression Analysis for Ambivalent, Benevolent, and Hostile Sexism Interactions with Source Gender and Open-Minded Cognition as the Dependent Variable

Figure 2. Centered Benevolent Sexism Analysis
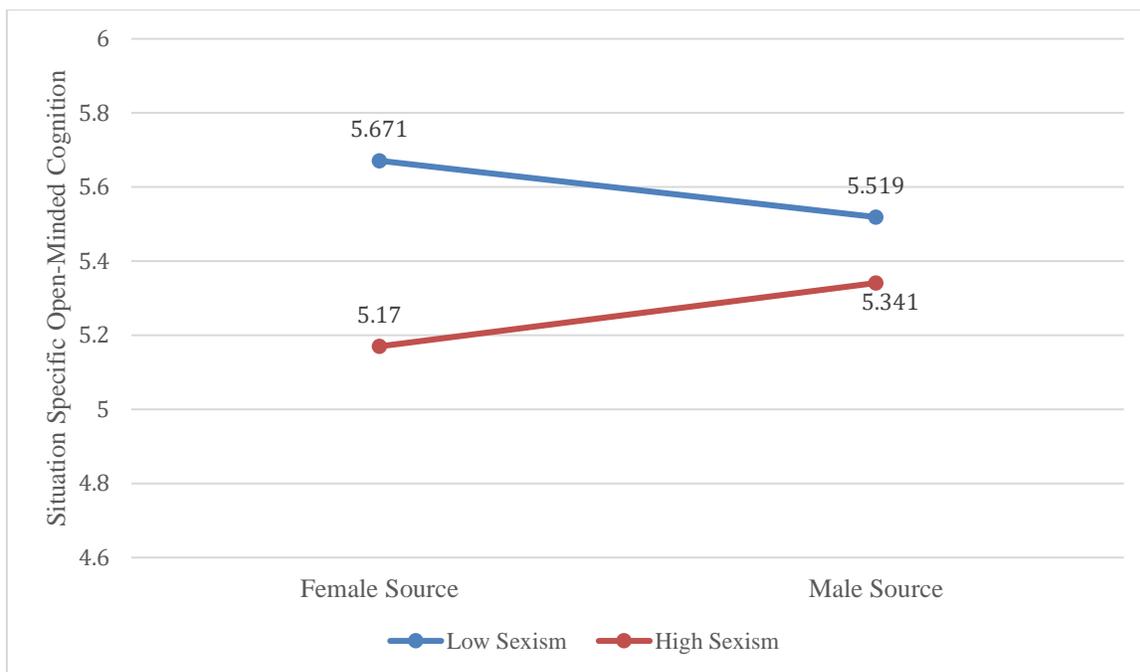
b=-.152, SE=.152, t(383)=-.1.001, p=317, b=.170, SE=.155, t(383)=1.096, p=.274

Figure 3. Centered Hostile Sexism Analysis
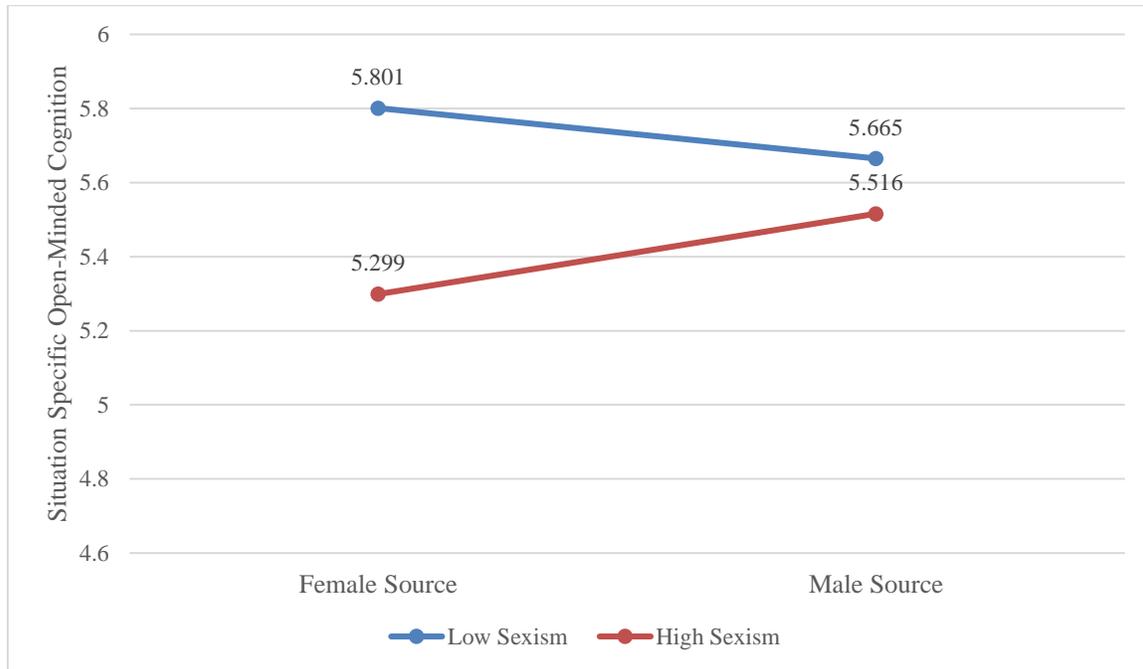
$b=-.168$, SE=.150, $t(383)=-.1.122$, $p=.263$, $b=.160$, SE=.152, $t(383)=1.053$, $p=.293$

Discussion

In this study there appears to be no main effect of Source Gender on Open-Minded Cognition which does not support the first hypothesis which stated that participants would be more open minded in the Male Source condition than in the Female source condition. The means for both conditions were nearly identical and given the negative main effect of Ambivalent Sexism on Open-Minded Cognition this signifies a possible design flaw with this study.

The Ambivalent Sexism by Source Gender interaction on Open-Minded Cognition was borderline significant with slopes consistent with hypothesis 2a, although the simple effect of Source Gender was not significant within the high sexist or low sexist group. Because the directionality was consistent with the hypothesis, this gives further evidence of this study being

underpowered or a flaw within the study design. There was also no significant knock-back interaction of low sexism participant being more open minded towards the female source as proposed in hypothesis 2b. As with hypothesis 2a, the directionality, however, is correct with Low Sexism participants reporting more open-mindedness towards the Female Source compared to the Male Source.

There was a significant finding not included in the original hypotheses of a negative main effect of sexism on Open-Minded Cognition which does support previous research that openness to experience, which is related to Open-Minded Cognition, is a predictor of both prejudice and sexism (Ekehammar & Akrami, 2007).

Limitations and Future Directions

Because there was a borderline significant effect with slopes consistent with the second hypothesis, it may be the case that the present study was underpowered. Also, this was a between-subjects design, meaning the participants where in separate conditions for the manipulation, which is a less powerful design than a within-subjects design which would allow the subjects receiving the manipulation to all receive the same manipulation. Another limitation is that there also was no control group, which would have allowed the researcher to compare a group not receiving the manipulation to the group receiving the manipulation.

The chosen topic of military spending could also be a factor as to why there was no support for the hypotheses. The military, while a male dominated field, is only experienced by small percentage of the population, with estimates as of 2018 of only 7% of US adults being veterans (Schaeffer, 2021) and around 1.3 million active military personnel, or less than one-half a percent of the population in the US, though with an ever-growing female population of 16%

(CFR.Org, 2020). Because of the small amount of people that experience military life it is possible that military matters were not a topic the participants could relate to, and as such they did not have a strong enough opinion about to care about either source. A topic that is more known to the general population might cause a stronger effect, but future research would need to control for any possible confounds.

Another possible limitation with this study is the gender of the participants. No measures were taken to examine the differing levels of openmindedness among males and females. As was previously mentioned, there are women who have benevolent sexist attitudes because it provides women in heterosexual relationships with a sense of security with their partners continued reliability and devotion (Cross & Overall, 2017) and in contrast, women who are more liberal in their political and social attitudes may be more likely to reject both Benevolent and Hostile sexist attitudes. There are also studies that show a difference in how cis gender and transgender individuals view gender as transgender individuals typically express their gender identities outside traditional heteronormative definitions (Nagoshi & Brzuzy, 2010), which could create an additional confound within the study. In future studies, specifically focusing on cis gender male participants could create a stronger effect and yield significant results for the first hypothesis.

The main focus for future iterations would be to correct the underpowered nature of this study and eliminate any confounds. As previously mentioned, repeating this study to find a significant finding include eliminating any gender confounds by specifically focusing on cisgender men. Another possible direction would be to focus on differences between those of different political ideologies. Republican sexist attitudes might be stronger than Democrat sexist attitudes and Conservative attitudes different from Liberal. Following previous research on open

mindedness and political ideology (Price et al., 2015) the conservative and republican aligned participants should be less open-minded towards the male source compared to the female source. This effect should be stronger if those individuals scored high in Ambivalent Sexism.

Another future study could focus on differences between religious ideologies in both sexist and open-minded attitudes. In the previous study there were no demographic questions to ascertain the religious demographics of the participants, however it would be beneficial to look further into how the differences in religion would react to the manipulation in future research.

Other future directions would be to change the format of the study itself. A stronger effect might be attained by having the participant read multiple excerpts from the participant versus only reading one. Other ways we could adjust the parameters of the study would be to have the participant listen to a recording of people reading the excerpts instead of the participant reading it themselves. The reason this might create a stronger effect is that when the participant is reading the excerpt, they are either imagining a voice in their head which might be their own or not hearing the voice at all. Having two people read the excerpt that has a feminine and masculine tone might strengthen the gender effect of the current study.

APPENDIX A

EXPERIMENTAL MATERIALS

Introductory Portion of Materials

[Instruction to Participants] *Imagine you are serving as a member of a committee in the military that is in charge of approving the military spending budget. This budget is typically drafted by politicians, some of whom have no previous experience in military matters. First, you will be asked to read an actual excerpt about Military Defense and Spending that was written by a politician named [**David Smith/Cassandra Smith**] (a short paragraph).*

Materials the Participant Reads Before Responding to the SSOMC Measure

Excerpt Taken from David Smith's [Cassandra Smith's] defense budget proposal.

"...Military spending should be diverted to concentrate on drone advancement and remotely controlled automobiles to reduce casualties among military personnel. Reduction of casualties will allow for personnel to be diverted to responsibilities which will allow operations to be more efficient. These advancements will mostly likely not reduce casualties of civilians in military occupied areas.

Bot Screening

Instruction to participant: In a couple of sentences, please summarize the brief excerpt you just

read:

Situation Specific Open-Minded Cognition Measure in Materials

Please indicate how you think you will respond when reading the entire proposal written by

David Smith [Cassandra Smith].

1. While reading the entire proposal, I will be open to considering his(her) viewpoints.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

2. While reading the entire proposal, I will "tune out" any of his(her) messages I disagree with.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

3. I believe it will be a waste of time to pay attention to some of the proposed ideas.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

4. While reading the entire proposal I will reserve judgment until I have had a chance to hear all

his(her) arguments.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

5. While reading this excerpt, I will have no patience for arguments I disagree with.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

6. When thinking about this issue, I will seriously consider all of his(her) opinions.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

Ambivalent Sexism Measure in Materials

Test Ambivalent Sexism (*Please answer these questions to the best of your ability. This test is anonymous)*

Below is a series of statements concerning men and women and their relationships in contemporary society. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement using the following scale: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = slightly disagree; 4 = neutral 5 = slightly agree; 6 = agree; 7 = strongly agree.

1. No matter how accomplished he is, a man is not truly complete as a person unless he has the love of a woman.

2. In a disaster, women ought not necessarily be rescued before men.

3. Most women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist.

4. Feminists are not seeking for women to have more power than men.

5. Women should be cherished and protected by men.

6. Women seek to gain power by getting control over men.

7. Men are complete without women.

8. Women exaggerate problems they have at work.

9. When women lose to men in a fair competition, they typically complain about being discriminated against.

10. There are very few women who get a kick out of teasing men by seeming sexually available and then refusing male advances.

11. Women, compared to men, tend to have a superior moral sensibility.

12. Women, as compared to men, tend to have a more refined sense of culture and good taste.

[Page 5 of Materials]

Demographic Items in Materials

Please indicate you gender: Male, Female, Other

Please select your age category: 18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 65 and above

Please indicate your race: Black, White, Latino, Asian or Pacific Islander, Native American,

Other

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