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# I Cheat Because I Can: Power, Sexism And Approval Of Infidelity

Teni Davoudian  
*Marquette University*

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I CHEAT BECAUSE I CAN: POWER, SEXISM, AND APPROVAL OF  
INFIDELITY

by

Teni Davoudian, M.S.

A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School,  
Marquette University, in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

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ABSTRACT  
I CHEAT BECAUSE I CAN: POWER, SEXISM, AND APPROVAL OF  
INFIDELITY

Teni Davoudian, M.S.

Marquette University, 2014

This study examined the moderating role of ambivalent sexism in the relationship between power and approval of infidelity. College students were randomly assigned to high- and low-power conditions and completed measures assessing their perceived power, endorsed sexism toward men and women, and approval of their own possible infidelity. It was hypothesized that the association between perceived power and permissive attitudes toward infidelity would vary according to participants' endorsement of hostile and benevolent sexism. The hypotheses were partially supported, and the results revealed the importance of both participant gender and sexism as predictors of attitudes toward infidelity. Hostile sexism toward men and women moderated the relationship between power and approval of uncommitted sexual relationships and infidelity. For women, hostile sexism toward men was positively associated with permissive attitudes toward infidelity. For men, hostile sexism toward women was positively associated with approval of uncommitted sexual relationships. In addition, while hostile sexism toward women predicted approval of uncommitted sexual relationships, hostile sexism toward men was associated with approval of infidelity. Exploratory analyses examining participant's reported narcissism were also conducted. For men, hostile sexism toward women marginally moderated the relationship between narcissism and approval of uncommitted sexual relationships. These findings partially support an integrated model of infidelity that accounts for attitudinal differences as well as macro-level issues, such as gendered power.

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## INTRODUCTION

Romantic relationships are often defined by mutual love, adoration, and respect (Frei & Shaver, 2002). However, societal factors, such as the distribution of power between men and women (Felmlee, 1994; Sprecher, & Felmlee, 1997), personal attitudes, such as sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Overall, Sibley, & Tan, 2011; Rudman & Glick, 2008), and behaviors, such as infidelity (Berman & Frazier, 2005) can insidiously influence the quality of these intimate relationships. The purpose of this study was to examine how power inequities between heterosexual men and women are associated with perceptions of one's own potential infidelity. More specifically, sexism toward men and women was explored as a moderator of power and infidelity.

### **Infidelity**

Infidelity signifies the deterioration of and disregard for monogamy (Peluso, 2007). Estimates of infidelity among married couples in the United States range from 24% to 34% (Tafoya & Spitzberg, 2007). For non-married couples involved in serious dating relationships, 68% of women and 75% of men have reportedly engaged in adulterous behaviors (Wiederman & Hurd, 1999). Most studies suggest that men are more likely to commit infidelity than women (Atkins, Eldridge, Baucom, & Christensen, 2005; Waite & Joyner, 2001; Weiderman, 1997). However, some researchers believe that this gender gap is narrowing as women continue to gain socioeconomic independence (Oliver & Hyde, 1993).

Despite its prevalence, infidelity is considered to be immoral and unacceptable by most Americans (Laumann, Gagnon, Micheal, & Michaels, 1994; Mattingly, Wilson, Clark, Bequette, & Weilder, 2010; Previti & Amato, 2004). When examining gender

differences in attitudes toward infidelity, studies have found that men are more likely than women to find infidelity acceptable (Buunk & Bakker, 1995; Sheppard, Nelson, & Andreoli-Mathie, 1995). This finding may be partly due to the fact that monogamy and commitment are relatively less attractive to men (Sheppard et al., 1995). These gender differences are important to note because individuals who hold more permissive attitudes toward adultery and uncommitted sexual relationships are more likely to engage in adulterous acts (Barta & Kiene, 2005; Hackathorn, Mattingly, Clark, & Mattingly, 2011; Solstad & Mucic, 1999; Treas & Giesen, 2000). In other words, attitudes toward infidelity appear to be closely linked to one's willingness to engage in adulterous behaviors.

It is important to examine and better understand the correlates of infidelity because the disintegration of monogamy often predicts marital conflict and divorce (Amato & Previti, 2003). The discovery of infidelity by a betrayed partner can be a traumatic, life-changing event that results in a flood of negative emotions (Berman & Frazier, 2005). Betrayed partners often experience significant levels of anger, shame, hostility, grief, jealousy, and depression (see Shackelford, Buss, & Bennett, 2002 for a review). Infidelity is also one of the most commonly reported problems among couples seeking psychological treatment (Whisman, Dixon, & Johnson, 1997). At the same time, however, clinical psychologists believe that it is one of the most difficult problems to address and treat (Gordon, Baucom, & Snyder, 2004). Given the serious clinical implications that accompany infidelity, it is important to better understand the pathways that encourage or inhibit adulterous behaviors.

## **Relationship Power**

Possible connections between infidelity and power are made salient with each new political scandal, often featuring eminent figures engaged in salacious extramarital affairs (Lammers, Stoker, & Staple, 2010). Despite the vast amount of interest that such stories generate, little is known about the mechanisms connecting power and infidelity. The current study addressed this gap in the literature by assessing whether the relationship between power and approval of infidelity is moderated by sexism.

In many domains of life, including romantic relationships, the desire to obtain and maintain power serves as a strong driving force (Galinsky, Magee, Gruenfeld, Whitson, & Liljenquist, 2008). Within romantic relationships, power is a multifaceted concept defined in various ways (Berman & Frazier, 2005; Pulerwitz, Gortmaker, & Dejong, 2000). For example, some researchers define power as one partner's ability to influence the other partner's behavior (Blood & Wolfe, 1960), while others define it as the ability to be uninfluenced by others (Galinsky, et al., 2008). Power can also be measured relatively by comparing one partner to the other in terms of age, education level, and access to economic resources (Galliher, Rostosky, Welsh, & Kawagucci, 1999). Others argue that the powerful member of a romantic couple is the partner who has more decision-making power, is less dependent on their significant other, and possesses more resources (Pratto & Walker, 2004; Waller & Hill, 1951).

While definitions of power vary, many young, unmarried heterosexual couples report the existence of power inequities within their relationships (Felmlee, 1994; Sprecher, & Felmlee, 1997). Unequal distributions of power between intimate partners warrant discussion because they correlate with adverse outcomes for physical and mental

health. Within heterosexual and homosexual couples, non-egalitarian relationships are associated with higher levels of relationship dissatisfaction, when compared to egalitarian relationships (Caldwell & Paplau, 1984; Sprecher, & Felmlee, 1997). Low-power partners are more likely to experience frustration and depression; this psychological distress can eventually seep into other aspects of the relationship and, for example, negatively affect sexual satisfaction. Low-power partners are also more likely to react with increased negativity to conflicts within their romantic relationships (Sagrestano, Christensen, & Heavey, 1998). In addition, when a woman is the low-power partner, she may experience more depressive symptoms (Galliher et al., 1999), have greater difficulties negotiating safe sex (Harvey & Bird, 2004; Pulerwitz, Amaro, DeJong, Gortmaker, & Rudd, 2002; Wingood, Hunter-Gamble, & DiClemente, 1993), and be more likely to fall victim to domestic abuse (Rogers, Bidwell, & Wilson, 2005; Ronfeldt, Kimerling, & Arias, 1998; Sagrestano et al., 1998).

Given that certain emotions, such as anger, are associated with power and agency (Shields, Garner, Di Leone, & Hardley, 2006), it is not surprising that personal power and abuse are correlated. When societal norms dictate which emotions are more appropriate for men and women to express, gender disparities in power may occur. For example, while men are evaluated more negatively than women for expressing vulnerable emotions, such as anxiety and shame, women are discouraged from showing anger or aggression. As a result of emotion socialization, men may have more power in their interpersonal relationships (Shields et al., 2006).

A number of other theories have also attempted to account for the development and sustainment of unequal power within romantic contexts. According to Waller and

Hill's (1951) principle of least interest, the intimate partner who is less dependent on, interested in, or emotionally attached to their significant other is more powerful. In addition, the partner who has more attractive alternatives available to him or her outside of the current relationship also holds the majority of power. Consistent with this theory, studies have found that participants who report being less emotionally invested in their current romantic relationship relative to their significant others, are more likely to perceive holding the power within that relationship (Sprecher & Feilmee, 1997; Sprecher, Schmeekle, & Feilmee, 2006). On the other hand, partners who perceive themselves as being more emotionally involved often feel less powerful due to their dependence on and need for their significant others (Waller & Hill, 1951).

In support of the principle of least interest, a longitudinal study of non-married and married heterosexual couples found that participants who were less emotionally invested in their current relationships perceived having more power over whether their relationships would continue or end (Sprecher et al., 2006). A closer examination of heterosexual romantic relationships suggests that female partners, more than male partners, are perceived by both men and women to be more emotionally involved (Feilmee, 1994; Sprecher & Feilmee, 1997) and thus, less powerful in their relationships (Waller & Hill, 1951). Men, on the other hand, report being significantly less dependent on their female partners (Berman & Frazier, 2005); this indicates that the principle of least interest may favor men. In other words, the balance of power within heterosexual romantic relationships is related to gender, "and it is men, more often than women, who gain the upper hand in power" (Sprecher & Feilmee, 1997, p. 374).

Pratto and Walker's (2004) four bases of gendered power also addresses how women's dependence on men may lessen their power. This theory of power focuses on economic and social factors that maintain a gendered power hierarchy. Given that men report having more global power than women in romantic relationships (Felmlee, 1994; Sprecher & Felmlee, 1997), it is likely that one's gender influences the attainment of power within romantic sectors. Pratto and Walker posit that women's social obligations of raising children and completing housework coupled with the lower wages they receive (Chen, Fiske, & Lee 2009; Felmlee, 1994; Pratto & Walker, 2004; Travaglia, Overall, & Sibley, 2009) create impediments when they attempt to access socioeconomic resources (Chen, et al., 2009; Felmlee, 1994; Galliher et al., 1999). As a result, women, more so than men, are likely to suffer from poverty (Pratto & Walker, 2004). In support of this aspect of the theory, studies of married couples have repeatedly found that access to valued resources is positively correlated with more dominance in romantic relationships (see Galliher et al., 1999 for a review).

Another societal aspect that, according to the gendered theory of power, contributes to gendered power inequities is male force (Pratto & Walker, 2004). Throughout history and even today, women are more likely than men to fall victim to abuse, rape, and other forms of violence (Tiley & Brackley, 2003). Male-inflicted violence functions to keep women in a state of fear, which may limit women's freedoms and make them more dependent on men for physical protection (Pratto & Walker, 2004). The final factor that is hypothesized to contribute to gendered power inequities is consensual sexist ideology (Pratto & Walker, 2004); this includes the endorsement of traditional gender roles and gender stereotypes, which many women uphold (Glick &

Fiske, 1996). By supporting these sexist ideologies, women and men consensually fuel the existing power inequities that favor men in multiple facets of life.

### **Ambivalent Sexism**

Sexist ideology is defined as prejudicial beliefs and stereotypes based on gender, and it occurs cross-culturally at individual and institutional levels (Glick & Fiske, 1997). Although historically sexism has been conceptualized as overtly hostile attitudes toward women, research suggests that sexism can also manifest itself in a covert and seemingly amiable manner (Glick & Fiske, 1996). While sexist attitudes about women are often held by men (Glick & Fiske, 2001), heterosexual men and women depend on one another for interpersonal needs, such as intimacy and sexual reproduction (Glick & Fiske, 1996). This mutual interdependence can result in sexism that is ambivalent in nature. According to the ambivalent sexism theory, sexism is expressed both hostilely and benevolently toward women (Glick & Fiske, 1997).

Hostile sexism is an overt, adversarial view of gender relations in which women are characterized as wanting to gain control over men (Glick & Fiske, 2001). One who endorses hostile sexism expresses negative and derogatory attitudes toward women (Fischer, 2006), especially women who defy traditional gender roles or contest men's power (Chen, Fiske, & Lee, 2009). Unlike the overt nature of hostile sexism, benevolent sexism is a more covert justification of male dominance and traditional gender roles (Glick & Fiske, 1997). Benevolently sexist individuals assume that women are the weaker gender and thus, should be protected by men (Glick & Fiske, 1996). When women behave in a manner that is consistent with traditional gender roles, they are idealized and "placed upon a pedestal" by benevolently sexist individuals. Due to its

subjectively complimentary façade, benevolent sexism can be particularly insidious (Glick et al., 2000).

Various studies have found ways in which ambivalent sexism influences interactions between men and women. For example, hostile sexism is positively associated with men's willingness to commit rape (Abrams, Viki, Masser & Bohner, 2003) and to tolerate sexual harassment against women (Russell & Trigg, 2004). Hostile sexist men are also more likely to be verbally abusive (Forbes, Adams-Curtis, & White, 2004) and communicate hostilely with their partner, leading them to be less open to their partner's perspective (Overall et al., 2011).

While it is apparent that hostile sexism in men can have deleterious effects on romantic relationships, hostile sexism endorsed by women also deserves discussion. A recent study that presented participants with a hypothetical marital vignette in which the husband repeatedly insisted on having sexual intercourse with his wife, regardless of her repeated objections, found that hostile sexism in women was negatively associated with labeling forced sexual intercourse as rape (Duran, Moya, & Megias, 2011). In other words, women's sexist ideology may influence their definitions of sexual assault.

Similar to hostile sexism, benevolent sexism can also influence heterosexual romantic relationships. Benevolently sexist individuals hold traditional views about courtship and dating behaviors (Viki, Abrams, & Hutchinson, 2003). For example, men are expected to be chivalrous and initiate the courting process, which may restrict women's power in choosing a mate. Benevolent sexism can also play a role in sexual activities. More specifically, women who are partnered with benevolently sexist men often feel the need to "curb their natural instincts (e.g., not to actively seek sex even



when they want it) and wrap their sexual desires in the guise of worshipful love and romance” so as not to risk stepping outside of traditional gendered behaviors (Rudman & Glick, 2008, p. 239). It is important to note that couples who take on these traditional gender roles during intimacy report experiencing less sexual satisfaction (Sanchez, Crocker, & Boike, 2005). In addition discouraging women’s own sexual desires, benevolent sexism can also place pressure on women to fulfill their partner’s sexual appetite. A recent study examining the perceptions of sexual marital rights (e.g., men’s entitlement to have sex with their wives) and duties (e.g., women’s obligation to grant their husbands’ sexual requests) found a positive association between women’s benevolent sexism and their endorsement of wifely sexual duties (Duran, et al., 2011).

### **Ambivalent Sexism toward Men**

The inequitable yet intimate relationships between heterosexual men and women sometimes result in both genders holding ambivalently sexist attitudes toward men (Glick & Fiske, 1999; Zawisza, Luyt, & Zawadzka, 2012). For example, men and women may resent men’s higher societal status and thus develop hostilely sexist attitudes. By endorsing conventional stereotypes about men (e.g., perceptions of men being arrogant, sexually predatory, and aggressive), women with hostilely sexist views are able to differentiate themselves from men – a population that they begrudge. Despite the fact that these stereotypes about men appear to be negative, they are still associated with power, dominance, and agency. When women endorse these beliefs, they may be reinforcing men’s higher status within society.

Benevolent sexism toward men is based on the assumption that men are the weaker gender when it comes to certain aspects of life, such as childcare and housework

(Glick & Fiske, 1999). Therefore, men must rely on women's maternalism to function. Despite this perceived reliance on women, benevolent sexism toward men justifies women's servitude to men. Whereas benevolent sexism toward women robs women of much of their societal power, benevolent sexism toward men continues to maintain men's superiority and encourages women to tend to men's needs to compensate for the physical protection and financial resources that men provide. In fact, ambivalent sexism toward men is positively correlated with ambivalent sexism toward women (Glick et al., 2004).

Despite the large body of literature examining ambivalent sexism, very little research has been conducted on sexism toward men (Lee, Fiske, & Glick, 2010). The few existing studies on this topic suggest that sexism toward men occurs in most individualistic and collectivistic societies (Glick et al., 2004; Zawisza et al., 2012). Another study found that benevolent sexism toward men is positively correlated with acceptance of rape myths (Chapleau, Oswald, & Russell, 2007), suggesting that it may influence attitudes regarding sexual behaviors.

Overall, ambivalent sexism toward men and women sustains the existing patriarchal power imbalances in society by perpetuating traditional gender roles within romantic relationships; these roles often limit women to domesticated activities while men are encouraged to seek professional and financial success (Rudman & Fairchild, 2007). Threatened by the possibility of women gaining power as a result of their independence, ambivalently sexist men either overtly or covertly deny women some forms of power. In fact, the struggle for power between men and women is one of the foundations of this theory (Glick & Fiske, 1996). In order to fully understand the

implications of sexism within romantic relationships, this study explored how each gender is influenced by ambivalent sexism toward men and women.

### **Integrated Model of Power, Ambivalent Sexism, and Infidelity**

According to the reviewed research, ambivalent sexism (Overall et al., 2011; Rudman & Fairchild, 2007), power (Berman & Frazier, 2005; Sprecher, & Felmlee, 1997), and infidelity (Gordon et al., 2005; Whisman et al., 1997) influence the attitudes and behaviors of men and women in heterosexual romantic relationships. The present study proposed an integrated theoretical model of power and infidelity, moderated by both hostile and benevolent sexism toward men and women. In other words, we hypothesized that an important determinant of whether power leads to infidelity is the endorsement of hostile and benevolent sexism.

Regarding the connection between infidelity and power, previous research suggests that power increases the likelihood of infidelity (Lammers, Stoker, Jordan, Pollman, & Staple, 2011). It is thought that power and infidelity are associated because power can influence one's attitudes and behaviors (Galinsky et al., 2008; Gruenfeld, Inesi, Magee, & Galinsky, 2008). Those who possess power "see the world, themselves, and other people in a different manner, and they act in a different manner, than do individuals who lack power" (Lammers et al., 2011, p. 1192). For example, powerful individuals are more goal-oriented and interpersonally confident (Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Magee, 2003), which may have important implications pertaining to sexual activities (Kunstan, & Manner, 2011). Also, the powerful are more likely to take risks, engage in flirtatious behaviors, and focus on physically attractive people in their environment while assuming that others are sexually interested in them (Kunstan & Maner, 2011). At the

same time, powerful men and women are less rigid about their own morality (Lammers, Stapel, & Galinsky, 2010) and less sensitive to social disapproval (Galinsky et al., 2008). Taken together, these results suggest that perceptions of power may have important implications for sexual approach behaviors (Lammers, et al., 2011), which may ultimately encourage infidelity.

Lammers and colleagues (2011) examined the association between power and infidelity by studying over 1,500 professionals working in top management (e.g., CEOs), middle management (e.g., district managers), and low management (e.g., team leaders) positions in various Scandinavian companies. The results suggested that perceived power in men and women was positively associated with past infidelity (defined as sexual encounters kept secret from one's partner) and participants' intentions to engage in future infidelity (defined as the willingness to "cheat" on one's partner in the future). In other words, regardless of gender, power predicted infidelity.

It is possible that the endorsement of hostile and benevolent sexism moderates the relationships between power and infidelity due to a number of reasons. For men, hostile sexism encourages male sexual prowess and sustains the sexual double standard (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Hostile sexist men endorse the belief that women seek commitment from men in order to place a "tight leash" on them (Glick & Fiske, 1996, p. 500); these aversive attitudes toward commitment coupled with favorable attitudes toward sexual prowess may further encourage adulterous behaviors in men.

For women, the endorsement of hostile and benevolent sexism may discourage infidelity. For example, hostile and benevolent sexists respect and reward women who remain well within the boundaries of traditional gender roles, which include remaining

loyal and faithful to one's partner. Keeping this in mind, one can assume that women who endorse benevolent sexism may be less likely to be unfaithful, due to their desire to be wholesome and virtuous women deserving of male praise. Similarly, hostilely sexist women may be hesitant to be unfaithful due to their negative views of female sexuality. In fact, a recent study found that hostile sexism is positively associated with the justification of the use of violence against women who commit infidelity (Forbes, Jobe, White, Bloesch, & Adams-Curtis, 2005). If hostilely sexist women endorse punishment of adulterous women, they are perhaps less likely to engage in extradyadic relations.

While it appears as though hostile and benevolent sexism may discourage some women from engaging in infidelity, what can be said about women who are less likely to endorse sexist ideology? In their study of power and infidelity, Lammers and colleagues (2011) did not find any significant gender differences amongst powerful men and women in their past infidelity and intentions to engage in future infidelity. Perhaps economically independent, powerful women are just as likely as men to commit infidelity due to their lack of reliance on men for resources. Also, the fact that professional women challenge traditional gender roles by obtaining economic resources and professional power suggests that they are less likely to endorse ambivalent sexism and traditional gendered behaviors. It is important to note, however, that possessing power and rejecting sexism do not always lead to infidelity or other poor outcomes for romantic relationships. In fact, having a feminist partner predicts relationship satisfaction for both men and women (Rudman & Phelan, 2007). Given these mixed findings regarding women's possession of power and its implications for romantic relationships, the current study examined how sexism toward women plays a role in power and infidelity.

Regarding sexist attitudes toward men, it is possible that endorsing hostile or benevolent sexism toward men also moderates the relationship between power and infidelity among women. Since hostile sexism toward men arises when women resent men's ability to gain power (Glick & Fiske, 1999), these women may view infidelity as a way of leveling the gendered playing field. Benevolent sexism toward men likely moderates the relationship between power and infidelity differently. Since benevolent sexism toward men justifies women's servitude of men, women endorsing such views may be less likely to engage in infidelity. At the same time, however, it is important to mention that positive constructs, such as relationship satisfaction (Atkins et al, 2001), often predict women's sexual and emotional loyalty to their partners.

### **Current Study**

The current study builds upon the extant research on ambivalent sexism, power, and infidelity by proposing that hostile and benevolent sexism moderate the relationship between power and perceptions of one's own potential infidelity. To assess this model, participants underwent an experimental power prime in which they were assigned to a low-power or high-power condition. It was hypothesized that the association between perceived power and permissive attitudes toward infidelity would vary according to participants' endorsement of hostile and benevolent sexism toward women and men.

Hypothesis 1: For the high-power condition, men's approval of infidelity was expected to increase with hostile and benevolent sexism toward women. For women in the high-power condition, high approval of infidelity was anticipated, regardless of endorsed hostile or benevolent sexism.

Hypothesis 2: In the low-power condition, men's approval of infidelity was expected to decrease with benevolent sexism toward women. However, for low-power men, approval of infidelity was expected to increase as more hostile sexism was endorsed. For women in the low-power condition, low approval of infidelity was anticipated, regardless of endorsed hostile or benevolent sexism.

Hypothesis 3: Regarding sexism toward men, for the high-power condition, men's approval of infidelity was expected to decrease when hostile and benevolent sexism toward men increased. For women in the high-power condition, high approval of infidelity was anticipated, regardless of endorsed hostile or benevolent sexism.

Hypothesis 4: For men in the low-power condition, low approval of infidelity was expected, regardless of endorsed benevolent sexism toward men. However, low-power women's approval of infidelity was anticipated to decrease when benevolent sexism toward men increased. These women's approval of infidelity was expected to increase as hostile sexism toward men increased.

## METHOD

### Participants

Participants were female and male undergraduate psychology students enrolled in a medium-sized, private university in the Midwest region of the United States. All participants received partial course credit. Data were collected from 307 participants (169 females, 138 males). The mean age was 18.52 ( $SD = 1.62$ ) for women and 18.96 ( $SD = 2.61$ ) for men. Sixty percent ( $n = 184$ ) of the sample were freshman, 25.1% ( $n = 77$ ) were sophomores, 8.1% ( $n = 25$ ) were juniors, and 6.8% ( $n = 21$ ) were seniors. The majority of participants (81.4%,  $n = 250$ ) identified as Caucasian/White. Ethnic breakdown of the remaining participants was: 8.5% ( $n = 26$ ) Asian American, 6.8% ( $n = 21$ ) African American, 8.1% ( $n = 25$ ) Latino/Latina, 3.6% ( $n = 11$ ) Biracial, 1.0% ( $n = 3$ ) Native American, and 1.0% ( $n = 3$ ) other ethnicity (participants were allowed to choose more than one ethnic category). In regards to religious affiliation, 66.1% ( $n = 203$ ) identified as Catholic, 7.2% ( $n = 22$ ) Lutheran, 3.6% ( $n = 11$ ) Methodist, 0.7% ( $n = 2$ ) Hindu, and 0.3% ( $n = 2$ ) Buddhist (participants were allowed to choose more than one religious affiliation). Over 10% ( $n = 33$ ) did not identify with any of the provided religious affiliations, and no participants identified as Jewish, Mormon, or Episcopalian. Most participants (88.9%,  $n = 273$ ) categorized their sexual orientation as “completely heterosexual” while the remaining participants (11.1%,  $n = 34$ ) identified somewhere between 2 and 6 on a continuum, with higher numbers representing stronger identification with complete homosexuality.



## Materials and Procedures

**Ambivalent Sexism Inventory.** In order to assess participants' endorsement of hostile and benevolent sexism toward women, Glick and Fiske's (1996) Ambivalent Sexism Inventory was administered (ASI; Appendix A). The ASI is a 22-item self-report instrument that measures benevolent and hostile sexism in two subscales. Items are scored on a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 to 5 as follows: 0 = *disagree strongly*, 5 = *agree strongly*. Scores on each subscale are averaged in order to achieve hostile and benevolent sexism scores, with higher numbers denoting stronger sexist attitudes. Sample items from the hostile sexism subscale include: "Women are too easily offended," and "Feminists are seeking for women to have more power than men." Sample items from the benevolent subscale include: "In a disaster, women ought to be rescued before men," and "Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess." The coefficient alpha of the benevolent sexism and hostile sexism subscales were .76 and .84, respectively.

**Ambivalent Sexism toward Men Inventory.** To assess participants' hostile and benevolent attitudes toward men, Glick and Fiske's (1999) Ambivalent Sexism toward Men Inventory was administered (Appendix B). This scale consists of 20 items, such as "Men are less likely to fall apart in emergencies than women are," and "Men would be lost in this world if women weren't there to guide them." Separate subscales measure hostile and benevolent sexism toward men, and scores on each subscale are averaged in order to achieve a hostile and benevolent sexism score. All items are rated on a 6-point Likert scale (0 = *disagree strongly*, 5 = *agree strongly*), with higher scores indicating stronger sexist attitudes. The coefficient alphas of the benevolent sexism and hostile sexism toward men subscales were .79 and .84, respectively.

**Perceptions of Dating Infidelity Scale.** Since permissive attitudes toward infidelity predict acts of infidelity (Solstad & Mucic, 1999; Treas & Giesen, 2000), participants completed the Perception of Dating Infidelity Scale (PDIS: Wilson, Mattingly, Clark, Weidler, & Bequette, 2011; Appendix C). Studies have found that higher scores on this particular scale are predictive of actual infidelity (Hackathorn et al., 2011; Wilson et al., 2011). Items on this measure pertain to spending time with an extradyadic partner, withholding information from one's partner, and engaging in adulterous sexual acts. Each item is rated on a 5-point scale (1 = *always cheating* to 5 = *never cheating*), with higher scores denoting more permissive attitudes toward one's own possible behaviors of infidelity. The coefficient alpha of this scale was .75.

**Sociosexual Orientation Inventory.** The Sociosexual Orientation Inventory (SOI: Simpson & Gangestads, 1991; Appendix D) measures participants' covert attitudes towards uncommitted sexual relationships. Although this measure does not directly address infidelity, recent research has found that favorable attitudes toward uncommitted sexual relationships, as measured by the SOI, predict greater likelihood of sexual infidelity (Barta & Kiene, 2005; Seal, Agostinelli, & Hannett, 1994). In addition, within biopsychological research, the SOI is commonly utilized to assess attitudes toward infidelity (McIntyre et al., 2006; van Anders, Hamilton, Schmidt, & Watson, 2007; van Anders & Watson, 2006).

The SOI includes items such as, "How often do you fantasize about having sex with someone other than your current (most recent) partner," and "How often do you experience sexual arousal when you are in contact with someone you are not in a committed relationship with?" Lower scores denote a restricted sociosexual attitude,

suggesting that the participant likely endorses monogamy and rejects sexual encounters outside of one's main relationship. Higher scores represent a nonrestricted attitude, in which case sexual relations outside of the primary relationship are, to a varying degree, acceptable. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .87.

**Narcissistic Personality Inventory-16.** Given that a number of studies suggest that personal power and dominance positively correlate with self-reported narcissism (Anderson, John, Keltner, 2012; Brown & Zeigler-Hill, 2004; Dufner, Rauthmann, Czarna, & Denissen, 2013; Carlson, Vazire, S., & Oltmanns, 2011), participants' narcissism was assessed as a proxy measure of power. The Narcissistic Personality Inventory-16 (NPI-16; Ames, Rose, & Anderson, 2006; Appendix E) is a shortened version of Raskin & Terry's (1998) questionnaire assessing narcissism in non-clinical populations. The NPI-16 allows for the measurement of participants' self-perceived possession of power through their personality characteristics. Participants were given a pair of forced-choice statements ("I really like to be the center of attention" and "It makes me uncomfortable to be the center of attention") and asked to choose the statement that described them more accurately. Ames and colleagues (2006) reported a coefficient alpha of .72

**Demographics.** All participants responded to demographic items that assessed their gender, class standing, religious affiliation, and ethnicity (Appendix F). A 7-point Likert scale (1 = *completely heterosexual*, 7 = *completely homosexual*) assessed participants' sexual orientation (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1984).

**Procedures.** Participants arrived at a research lab where an undergraduate research assistant obtained informed consent and randomly assigned participants to the

high-power or low-power condition. Next, participants were seated at a computer in a private room where they responded to all questionnaires.

The procedure for manipulating positions of power was modeled after studies examining social power (Gallinsky et al., 2003; Gruenfeld et al., 2008; Lammers, Gallinsky, Gordijn, & Otten, 2008). The wording of the primes was slightly altered to reflect power within a romantic context. Conscious mindset priming tasks, such as the manipulation utilized in this study (described below), require participants to actively and intentionally engage in the prime (Bargh & Chartrand, 2000). As a result, these manipulations have been found to be effective and endure throughout many questionnaires (Bargh & Chartrand, 2000). Participants assigned to the high-power condition read the following instructions:

Please recall a particular incident (e.g., date, phone call, interaction) during a past or present romantic relationship in which you had power over your partner. By power, we mean that you felt like you were relatively less emotionally invested in that relationship, you had more alternative romantic possibilities than your partner, or you had more money or more social status relative to your partner.

Please describe this situation in which you had power – what happened, how you felt, etc. by typing your response in the provided text box.

Participants assigned to the low-power condition read the following instructions:

Please recall a particular incident (e.g., date, phone call, interaction) during a past or present romantic relationship in which you had less power than your partner.

By having less power, we mean that you felt like you were more emotionally invested in that relationship, you had less alternative romantic possibilities than

your partner, or you had less money or social status relative to your partner.

Please describe this situation in which you had power – what happened, how you felt, etc. by typing your response in the provided text box.

Immediately following the power prime, participants were given a manipulation check adopted from previous studies examining power and infidelity (Lammers et al., 2011; Lammers et al., 2010). A vertical line (ranging from 0 to 10) appeared on the computer screen, and participants indicated where on that line their current perceived power lies, with higher numbers indicating more power. Although it is difficult to assess whether perceptions of power accurately represent one's cognitive and affective states, research suggests that participants' perceptions of power are largely comparable to the observations of trained coders (Dunbar & Burgoon, 2005). In addition, perceptions of possessing power, whether accurate or not, often predict behaviors that increase one's power (Anderson et al., 2012).

Following the power prime and manipulation check, participants completed the self-report measures. As previously mentioned, The Narcissistic Personality Inventory-16 was utilized to assess trait power. Upon completion of the study, the undergraduate research assistant debriefed participants about the study and thanked them for their participation.

## RESULTS

### **Preliminary Analyses**

The original sample size consisted of 316 participants. The data from four participants were excluded from all analyses due to incompleteness while another two participants were excluded because their survey completion time fell three standard deviations below the mean, suggesting careless responding. Also, an additional three participants were not included in the analyses because they identified as “completely homosexual” on a demographic questionnaire. Due to the fact that there were not enough participants in this group to conduct separate analyses examining homosexual relationships, it was determined these participants would be excluded from further analyses. The final sample size consisted of 307 participants (169 females, 138 males).

All analyses were conducted in SPSS Version 19 and data were screened to ensure that they met the assumptions of the analyses. The means and standard deviations of each variable for men and women are presented in Table 1. The zero-order correlations of all major variables are presented in Table 2.

Table 1  
*Means and Standard Deviations of Major Variables for Women and Men*

Variable	Women	Men
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
Hostile Sexism <sup>a</sup>	3.41 (.86)	3.61 (.89)
Benevolent Sexism	3.67 (.73)	3.67 (.75)
Hostile Sexism toward Men <sup>b</sup>	3.21 (.84)	2.83 (.79)
Benevolent Sexism toward Men	3.37 (.96)	3.47 (.94)
Perceptions of Infidelity <sup>c</sup>	2.37 (.62)	2.54 (.55)
Sociosexual Orientation Inventory <sup>d</sup>	2.62 (1.27)	3.96 (1.54)
Narcissistic Personality Inventory <sup>e</sup>	7.79 (1.84)	7.95 (2.12)

*Note.*

<sup>a</sup> Hostile and benevolent sexism were rated on 6-point scales (0 = *disagree strongly*, 5 = *agree strongly*).

<sup>b</sup> Hostile and benevolent sexism toward men were rated on 6-point scales (0 = *disagree strongly*, 5 = *agree strongly*).

<sup>c</sup> Perceptions of Infidelity were rated on a 7-point scale (0 = *always cheating*, 6 = *never cheating*).

<sup>d</sup> Sociosexual Orientation was rated on a 9-point scale, with higher numbers representing more approval of non-monogamous sexual encounters.

<sup>e</sup> Narcissistic Personality Inventory was a forced-choice questionnaire (the sum of the questionnaire was utilized).

Table 2  
*Pearson Correlations of Major Variables*

	Gender	HS	BS	HSM	BSM	Infidelity	Sociosex	Narcissism
Gender	—							
HS	.11*	—						
BS	-.01	.16**	—					
HSM	-.23**	.19**	.39**	—				
BSM	.05	.50**	.57**	.51**	—			
Infidelity	.14*	.02	-.14*	-.13**	-.16*	—		
Sociosex	.44**	.12*	-.09	-.01	-.07	.15**	—	
Narcissism	.03	.07	-.02	.03	-.07	.02	.12*	—

\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$

To examine the relationship between the high-power and low-power conditions and infidelity, as moderated by hostile and benevolent sexism toward men and women for each gender, benevolent and hostile sexism were centered, and hierarchical regressions were conducted. Gender, perceived power, and sexism (hostile or benevolent, according to the relevant hypothesis) were entered in step one of the regression. In step two, the interactions between gender, sexism, and power (high- and low-power conditions) were added. In the final step, the three-way interaction between gender, power, and sexism was examined. Separate analyses were conducted for the mean scores of the Sociosexual Orientation Inventory and the Perception of Dating Infidelity Scale. Significant interactions were followed up with simple slope analyses (Preacher, Curran, & Bauer, 2006).

### **Manipulation Check**

To test the effect size of the power manipulation, a one-way between-groups ANOVA was conducted. The interaction between the two conditions (high-power and low-power) and gender was not significant,  $F(1, 303) = .06, p = .81$ . The main effect for gender was not significant,  $F(1, 303) = 3.07, p = .09$ . However, there was a significant main effect for condition,  $F(1, 303) = 18.23, p < .01$ , partial eta squared = .11.

Participants in the high-power condition reported feeling significantly more powerful ( $M = 3.81, SD = 0.92$ ) than did those in the low-power condition ( $M = 3.18, SD = 0.89$ ).

Although the manipulation significantly shifted perceived power between the low- and high-power participants, both groups were below the midpoint of the post-manipulation measure (the scale ranged from 0 to 10, with higher number indicating more power).

More specifically, no participants, regardless of their condition, rated their power as



being very high on the post-manipulation scale. Ideally, the discrepancy between the low- and high-power groups would have covered a greater range of the post-manipulation measure as to demonstrate the effectiveness of the manipulation as it applies to real-life situations.

### **Power Manipulation Results**

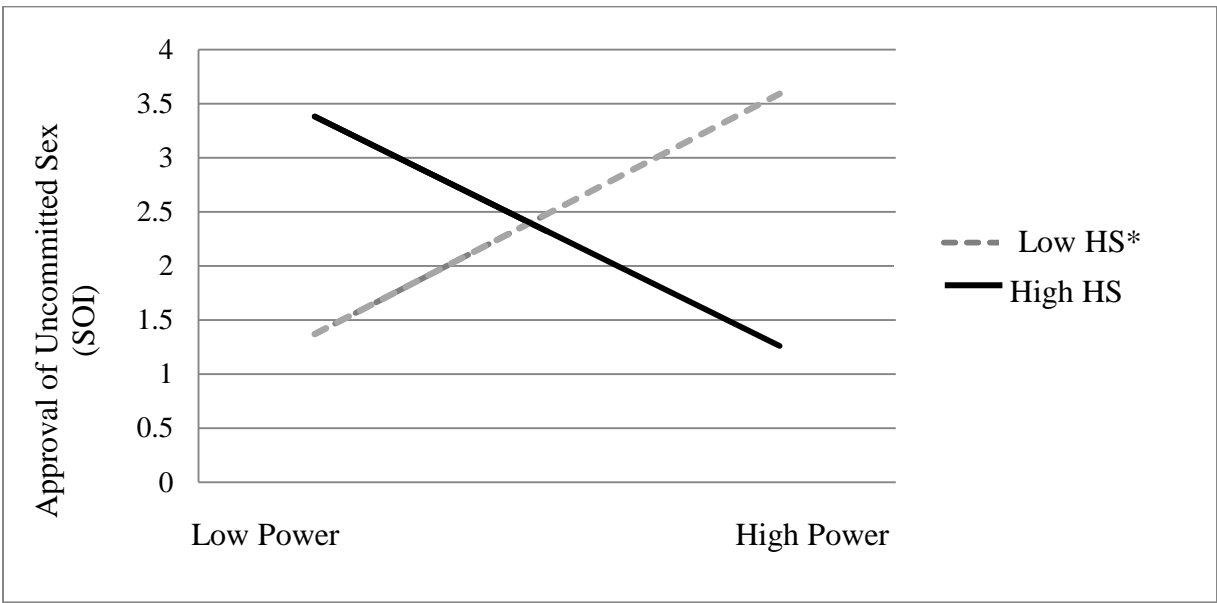
**Hostile sexism toward women.** It was hypothesized that, for the high-power condition, men's approval of their own potential infidelity would increase when hostile sexism toward women increased. For women in the high-power condition, high approval of infidelity, regardless of endorsed hostile sexism was expected. In the low-power condition, it was anticipated that men's approval of infidelity would increase when hostile sexism toward women increased. For women in the low-power condition, low approval of infidelity, regardless of endorsed hostile sexism, was expected.

**Perceptions of Infidelity Scale.** In step one of the hierarchical regression, power, gender, and hostile sexism toward women did not significantly predict perceptions of infidelity, as measured by the Perceptions of Infidelity Scale,  $F(3, 303) = 2.41, p = .07, R^2_{\text{change}} = .04$ . Two-way interactions between gender, hostile sexism, and power were not significant,  $F_{\text{change}}(3, 300) = 1.41, p = .73, R^2_{\text{change}} = .01$ . The three-way interaction did not contribute significantly to the prediction of the outcome variable,  $F_{\text{change}}(1, 299) = 1.25, p = .58, R^2_{\text{change}} = .04$ .

**Sociosexual Orientation Inventory.** In step one of the hierarchical regression, power, gender, and hostile sexism toward women significantly predicted sociosexual orientation,  $F(3, 303) = 24.56, p < .001, R^2_{\text{change}} = .20$ . Gender predicted sociosexual orientation ( $\beta = 1.33, p < .001$ ) such that men were more approving of

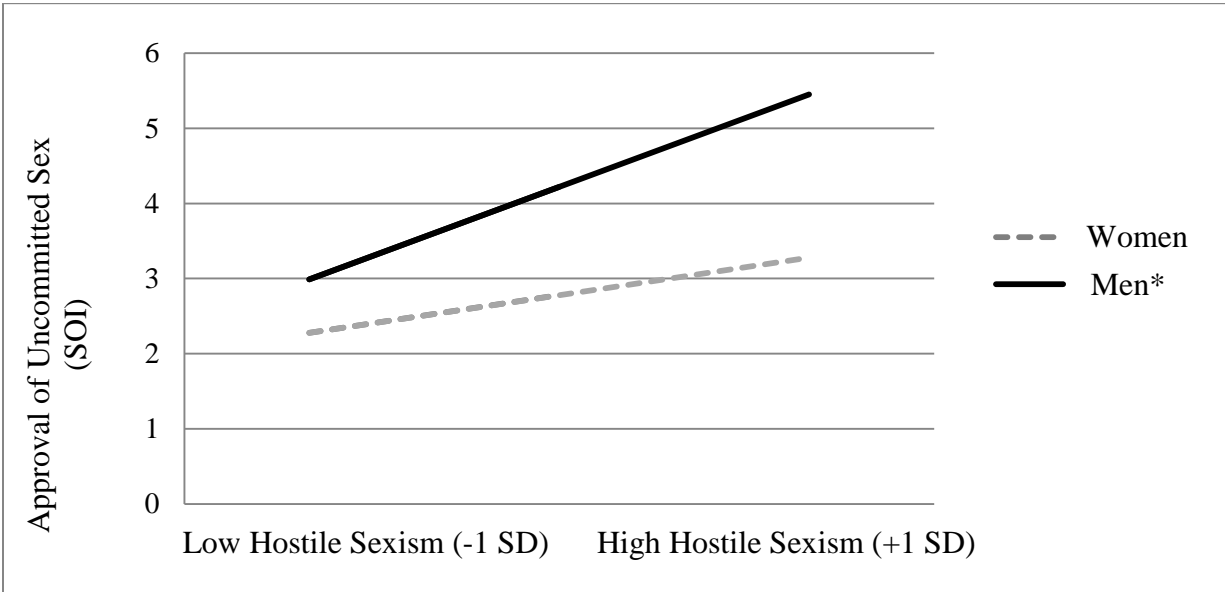
uncommitted sexual relationships. However, power ( $\beta = -.10, p = .53$ ) and hostile sexism toward women ( $\beta = .13, p = .15$ ) were not significantly associated with sociosexual orientation. Step two of the hierarchical regression, which included two-way interactions between power, gender, and hostile sexism, significantly predicted sociosexual orientation,  $F_{\text{change}}(3, 300) = 15.95, p < .001, R^2_{\text{change}} = .05$ . The interaction between power and gender was not significant ( $\beta = .48, p = .13$ ). There was a significant interaction between power and hostile sexism ( $\beta = -.60, p < .01$ ). Simple slope analyses (Preacher, 2006) testing for power in the high- and low-power conditions indicated that, for participants who endorsed less hostile sexism, there was a significant positive association between power and approval of uncommitted sexual relations ( $b = .64, p < .01$ ). However, the slope was not significant for higher levels of endorsed hostile sexism ( $b = -.41, p = .13$ ); see Figure 1. The interaction between gender and hostile sexism was also significant ( $\beta = .42, p = .02$ ). Simple slope analyses (Preacher, 2006) testing for hostile sexism at 1 SD above and below the mean indicated that, for men, there was a significant positive association between hostile sexism and approval of uncommitted sexual acts ( $b = .71, p = .03$ ). However, the slope was not significant for women ( $b = -.28, p = .37$ ); see Figure 2. The three-way interaction did not contribute significantly to the prediction of sociosexual orientation,  $F_{\text{change}}(1, 299) = 13.63, p = .89, R^2_{\text{change}} = .00$ .

Figure 1  
*Approval of Uncommitted Sex by Power and Hostile Sexism toward Women*



\*Simple slope test significant at  $p < .05$

Figure 2  
*Approval of Uncommitted Sex by Gender and Hostile Sexism toward Women*



\*Simple slope test significant at  $p < .05$

**Benevolent sexism toward women.** It was hypothesized that, for the high-power condition, men's approval of their own potential infidelity would increase when benevolent sexism toward women increased. For women in the high-power condition, high approval of infidelity, regardless of endorsed benevolent sexism, was expected. In the low-power condition, it was anticipated that men's approval of infidelity would decrease when benevolent sexism toward women decreased. For women in the low-power condition, low approval of infidelity, regardless of endorsed benevolent sexism, was expected.

**Perceptions of Infidelity Scale.** In step one of the hierarchical regression, power, gender, and benevolent sexism toward women significantly predicted perceptions of infidelity, as measured by the Perceptions of Infidelity Scale,  $F(3, 303) = 4.47, p < .01, R^2_{\text{change}} = .04$ . Gender predicted perceptions of infidelity ( $\beta = .16, p < .01$ ) such that men were more accepting of infidelity. There was also a significant negative correlation between benevolent sexism toward women and women's approval of infidelity ( $\beta = -.1, p = .04$ ). Power ( $\beta = -.06, p = .35$ ) and benevolent sexism toward women ( $\beta = .09, p = .09$ ) were not significantly associated with perceptions of infidelity. Step two of the model was not significant,  $F_{\text{change}}(3, 300) = 2.95, p = .24, R^2_{\text{change}} = .01$ . The three-way interaction did not contribute significantly to the prediction of the outcome variable,  $F_{\text{change}}(1, 299) = 2.59, p = .14, R^2_{\text{change}} = .00$ .

**Sociosexual Orientation Inventory.** In step one of the hierarchical regression, gender, benevolent sexism toward women, and power significantly predicted sociosexual orientation,  $F(3, 303) = 24.78, p < .001, R^2_{\text{change}} = .20$ . Gender predicted sociosexual orientation ( $\beta = 1.36, p < .001$ ) such that men were more likely hold

permissive attitudes toward uncommitted sexual relationships. However, power ( $\beta = -.09$ ,  $p = .57$ ) and benevolent sexism toward women ( $\beta = -.18$ ,  $p = .10$ ) were not significantly associated with sociosexual orientation.

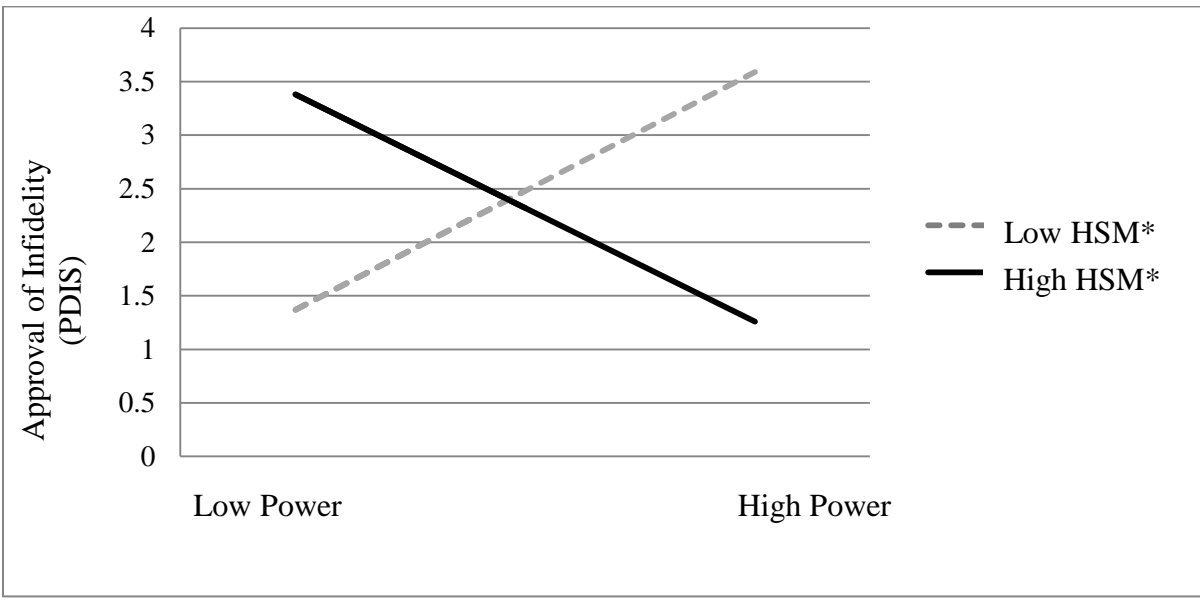
Step two of the hierarchical regression, which included two-way interactions between power, gender, and benevolent sexism toward women, was not significant,  $F_{\text{change}}(3, 300) = 13.16$ ,  $p = .08$ ,  $R^2 \text{ Change} = .21$ . The three-way interaction did not contribute significantly to sociosexual orientation,  $F_{\text{change}}(1, 299) = 11.35$ ,  $p = .89$ ,  $R^2_{\text{change}} = .21$ .

**Hostile sexism toward men.** It was hypothesized that, for the high-power condition, men's approval of their own potential infidelity would decrease when hostile sexism toward men increased. For women in the high-power condition, high approval of infidelity, regardless of endorsed hostile sexism toward men, was expected. In the low-power condition, it was anticipated that men would have low approval of infidelity, regardless of endorsed hostile sexism toward men. For low-power women, it was hypothesized that approval of infidelity would increase as hostile sexism toward men increased.

**Perceptions of Infidelity Scale.** In step one of the hierarchical regression, power, gender, and hostile sexism toward men significantly predicted perceptions of infidelity, as measured by the Perceptions of Infidelity Scale,  $F(3, 303) = 3.49$ ,  $p = .01$ ,  $R^2_{\text{change}} = .03$ . Gender predicted perceptions of infidelity ( $\beta = .14$ ,  $p = .04$ ) such that men were more accepting of infidelity. Power ( $\beta = -.07$ ,  $p = .33$ ) and hostile sexism toward men ( $\beta = .08$ ,  $p = .12$ ) were not significantly associated with perceptions of infidelity. Step two of the model was significant,  $F_{\text{change}}(3, 300) = 2.73$ ,  $p = .01$ ,  $R^2_{\text{change}} = .02$ . The interaction between power and gender was not significant ( $\beta = -.07$ ,  $p = .61$ ). However,

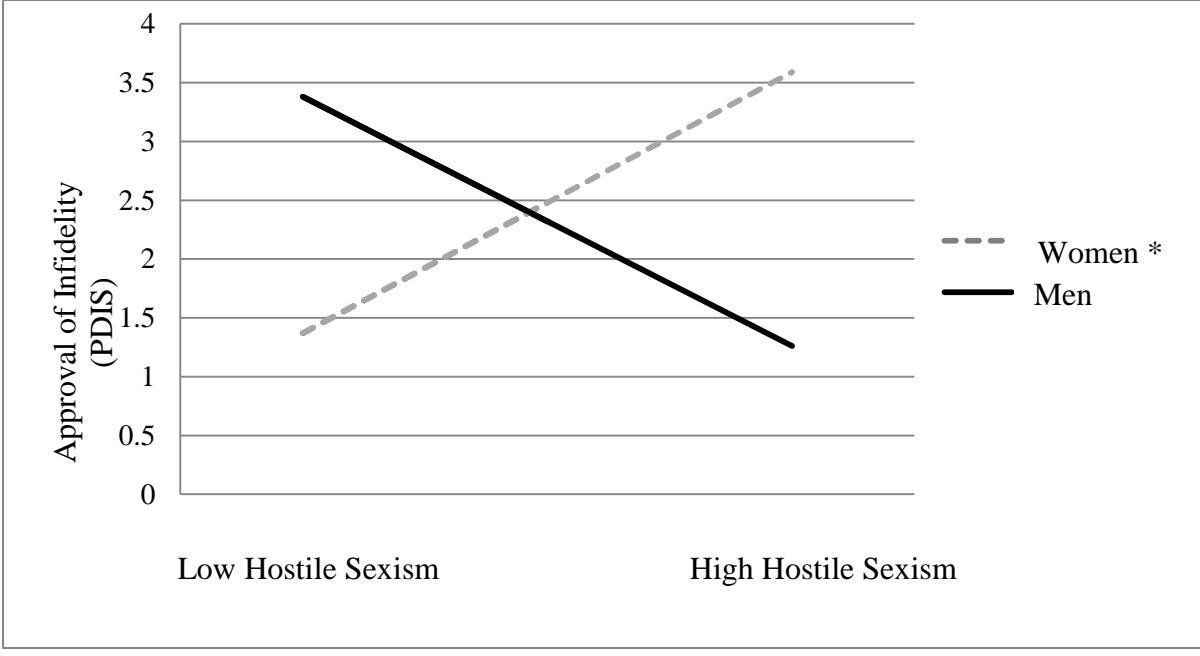
the interaction between power and hostile sexism was significant ( $\beta = -1.30, p = .02$ ). Simple slope analyses (Preacher, 2006) testing for power in the high-and low-power conditions indicated that, for participants who endorsed less hostile sexism, there was a significant positive association between power and approval of infidelity ( $b = 1.37, p < .01$ ). For those participants who endorsed more hostile sexism toward men, there was a negative association between power and approval of infidelity ( $b = -1.06, p = .03$ ); see Figure 3. The interaction between gender and hostile sexism toward men was also significant ( $\beta = -1.25, p = .03$ ). Simple slope analyses (Preacher, 2006) testing for hostile sexism toward men at 1 SD above and below the mean indicated that, for women, there was a significant positive association between hostile sexism toward men and approval of infidelity ( $b = 1.20, p = .03$ ). However the slope was not significant for men ( $b = .05, p = .43$ ); see Figure 4. The three-way interaction did not contribute significantly to the prediction of the outcome variable,  $F_{\text{change}}(1, 299) = 2.33, p = .96, R^2_{\text{change}} = .00$ .

Figure 3  
*Approval of Dating Infidelity by Power and Hostile Sexism toward Men*



\*Simple slope test significant at  $p < .05$

Figure 4  
*Approval of Dating Infidelity by Gender and Hostile Sexism toward Men*



\*Simple slope test significant at  $p < .05$

***Sociosexual Orientation Inventory.*** In step one of the hierarchical regression, power, gender, and hostile sexism toward women significantly predicted sociosexual orientation,  $F(3,303) = 25.21, p < .001, R^2_{\text{change}} = .20$ . Gender predicted sociosexual orientation ( $\beta = 1.43, p < .001$ ) such that men were more likely hold permissive attitudes toward uncommitted sexual relationships. However, power ( $\beta = -.11, p = .49$ ) and hostile sexism toward men ( $\beta = .19, p = .09$ ) were not significantly associated with sociosexual orientation. Step two of the hierarchical regression, which included two-way interactions between power, gender, and hostile sexism toward men, was not significant,  $F_{\text{change}}(3, 300) = 13.31, p = .27, R^2_{\text{change}} = .20$ . The three-way interaction did not contribute significantly to the prediction of the outcome variable,  $F_{\text{change}}(1, 299) = 11.46, p = .48, R^2_{\text{change}} = .00$ .

***Benevolent sexism toward men.*** It was hypothesized that, for the high-power condition, men's approval of their own potential infidelity would decrease when benevolent sexism toward men increased. For women in the high-power condition, high approval of infidelity, regardless of endorsed benevolent sexism toward men, was expected. For women in the low-power condition, it was hypothesized that approval of infidelity would decrease when benevolent sexism toward men increased.

***Perceptions of Infidelity Scale.*** In step one of the hierarchical regression, power, gender, and benevolent sexism toward men significantly predicted perceptions of infidelity, as measured by the Perceptions of Infidelity Scale,  $F(3, 303) = 3.57, p = .02, R^2_{\text{change}} = .03$ . Gender predicted perceptions of infidelity ( $\beta = .17, p < .01$ ) such that men were more accepting of infidelity. Power ( $\beta = .06, p = .35$ ) and benevolent sexism toward men ( $\beta = -.10, p = .07$ ) were not significantly associated with perceptions of infidelity.



Step two of the model was not significant,  $F_{\text{change}}(3, 300) = 2.21, p = .47, R^2_{\text{change}} = .01$ .

The three-way interaction did not contribute significantly to the prediction of the outcome variable,  $F_{\text{change}}(1, 299) = 1.96, p = .50, R^2_{\text{change}} = .00$ .

***Sociosexual Orientation Inventory.*** In step one of the hierarchical regression, gender, benevolent sexism toward men, and power significantly predicted sociosexual orientation,  $F(3, 303) = 25.21, p < .001, R^2_{\text{change}} = .20$ . Gender predicted sociosexual orientation ( $\beta = 1.43, p < .001$ ) such that men were more likely hold permissive attitudes toward uncommitted sexual relationships. However, power ( $\beta = -.11, p = .50$ ) and benevolent sexism toward men ( $\beta = .19, p = .09$ ) were not significantly associated with sociosexual orientation. Step two of the hierarchical regression, which included two-way interactions between power, gender, and hostile sexism, was not significant,  $F_{\text{change}}(3, 300) = 13.31, p = .16, R^2_{\text{change}} = .01$ . The three-way interaction did not contribute significantly to the prediction of the outcome variable,  $F_{\text{change}}(1, 299) = 11.46, p = .41, R^2_{\text{change}} = .00$ .

### **Narcissistic Personality Inventory-16 Results**

Given that the range of reported power was below the mean, even for the high-power group, additional analyses utilizing the Narcissistic Personality Inventory-16 were conducted to assess trait power. The sum of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory was centered. Hierarchical regressions were conducted for men and women with centered sexism scores. In step one of the regression, narcissism and sexism (hostile or benevolent, according to the relevant hypothesis) were analyzed. In step two, the interaction between sexism and narcissism were added. Separate analyses were conducted for the mean scores of the Sociosexual Orientation Inventory and the Perception of Dating Infidelity Scale.

Significant interactions were followed up with simple slope analyses (Preacher et al., 2006).

### **Hostile Sexism toward Women**

***Perceptions of Infidelity Scale.*** In step one of the hierarchical regression, narcissism and hostile sexism toward women did not significantly predict women's perceptions of infidelity, as measured by the Perceptions of Infidelity Scale,  $F(2, 168) = .22, p = .81$ . For women, the two-way interaction between narcissism and hostile sexism toward women was not significant,  $F_{\text{change}}(3, 168) = .44, p = .51, R^2_{\text{change}} < .01$ .

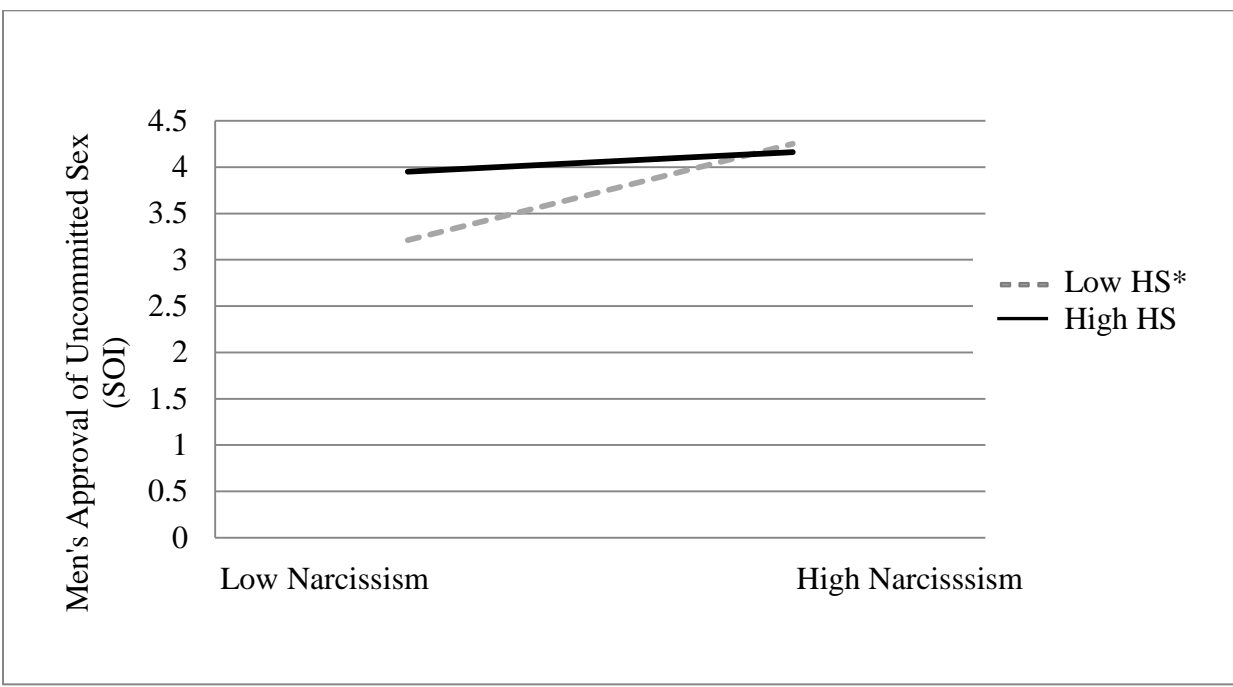
For men, step one of the hierarchical regression, which included narcissism and hostile sexism toward women, did not significantly predict men's perceptions of infidelity, as measured by the Perceptions of Infidelity Scale,  $F(2, 137) = .57, p = .56$ . The two-way interaction between narcissism and hostile sexism toward women was also not significant for men,  $F_{\text{change}}(3, 137) = .49, p = .51, R^2_{\text{change}} < .01$ .

***Sociosexual Orientation Inventory.*** In step one of the hierarchical regression, narcissism and hostile sexism toward men did not significantly predict women's sociosexual orientation,  $F(2, 168) = .36, p = .70$ . Step two of the hierarchical regression also did not significantly predict women's sociosexual orientation,  $F_{\text{change}}(3, 168) = .28, p = .60, R^2_{\text{change}} < .01$ .

For men, step one of the hierarchical regression, which included narcissism and hostile sexism toward women, significantly predict men's sociosexual orientation,  $F(2, 137) = 6.49, p < .01$ . Narcissism ( $\beta = .23, p < .01$ ) and hostile sexism toward women ( $\beta = .21, p = .01$ ) were positively associated with sociosexual orientation. Step two of the regression was marginally significant,  $F_{\text{change}}(3, 137) = 3.17, p = .08, R^2_{\text{change}} = .02$ .

Specifically, the interaction between men’s narcissism and hostile sexism toward women was marginally significant ( $\beta = -.15, p = .08$ ). Simple slope analyses (Preacher, 2006) testing for narcissism at 1 SD above and below the mean indicated that, for men who endorsed less hostile sexism toward women, there was a significant positive association between narcissism and approval of uncommitted sexual relations ( $b = .33, p < .01$ ). However, the slope was not significant for higher levels of endorsed hostile sexism ( $b = .30, p = .18$ ); see Figure 5.

Figure 5  
*Men’s Approval of Uncommitted Sex by Narcissism and Hostile Sexism toward Women*



\*Simple slope test significant at  $p < .05$

### **Benevolent Sexism toward Women**

*Perceptions of Infidelity Scale.* In step one of the hierarchical regression, narcissism and benevolent sexism toward women did not significantly predict women's perceptions of infidelity, as measured by the Perceptions of Infidelity Scale,  $F(2, 168) = 2.08, p = .13$ . However, there was a significant negative correlation between benevolent sexism toward women and women's approval of infidelity ( $\beta = -.16, p = .04$ ). The two-way interaction between narcissism and benevolent sexism was not significant for women,  $F_{\text{change}}(3, 168) = .48, p = .49, R^2_{\text{change}} < .01$ .

For men, step one of the hierarchical regression, which included narcissism and benevolent sexism toward women, did not significantly predict men's perceptions of infidelity, as measured by the Perceptions of Infidelity Scale,  $F(2, 137) = 1.10, p = .34$ . The two-way interaction between narcissism and benevolent sexism was not significant for men,  $F_{\text{change}}(3, 137) = 2.71, p = .10, R^2_{\text{change}} = .02$ .

*Sociosexual Orientation Inventory.* In step one of the hierarchical regression, narcissism and benevolent sexism toward women did not significantly predict women's sociosexual orientation,  $F(2, 168) = 1.18, p = .31$ . Step two of the hierarchical regression also did not significantly predict women's sociosexual orientation,  $F_{\text{change}}(3, 168) = .73, p = .39, R^2_{\text{change}} = .01$ .

For men, step one of the hierarchical regression, which included narcissism and benevolent sexism toward women, significantly predict men's sociosexual orientation,  $F(2, 137) = 2.67, p = .08$ . However, narcissism was positively correlated with sociosexual orientation ( $\beta = .18, p = .04$ ). Benevolent sexism toward women ( $\beta = -.07, p = .42$ ) was not significantly associated with sociosexual orientation. The two-way interaction

between men's narcissism and benevolent sexism toward women was not significant,  $F_{\text{change}}(3, 137) = .01, p = .95, R^2_{\text{change}} < .01$ .

### **Hostile Sexism toward Men**

***Perceptions of Infidelity Scale.*** In step one of the hierarchical regression, narcissism and hostile sexism toward men did not significantly predict women's perceptions of infidelity, as measured by the Perceptions of Infidelity Scale,  $F(2, 168) = 2.38, p = .10$ . However, women's hostile sexism toward men was positively associated with approval of infidelity ( $\beta = .17, p = .03$ ). Narcissism was not significantly associated with approval of infidelity ( $\beta = .01, p = .99$ ). Step two of the hierarchical regression was not significant,  $F_{\text{change}}(3, 168) = .89, p = .35, R^2_{\text{change}} < .01$ .

For men, step one of the hierarchical regression, which included narcissism and hostile sexism toward men, did not significantly predict perceptions of infidelity, as measured by the Perceptions of Infidelity Scale,  $F(2, 137) = .21, p = .81$ . The two-way interaction between narcissism and hostile sexism was also not significant for men,  $F_{\text{change}}(3, 137) = .20, p = .65, R^2_{\text{change}} < .01$ .

***Sociosexual Orientation Inventory.*** In step one of the hierarchical regression, narcissism and hostile sexism toward men did not significantly predict women's sociosexual orientation,  $F(2, 168) = .60, p = .77$ . Step two of the hierarchical regression, which included the two-way interaction between narcissism and hostile sexism, was not significant,  $F_{\text{change}}(3, 168) = .03, p = .87, R^2_{\text{change}} < .01$ .

For men, step one of the hierarchical regression, which included narcissism and hostile sexism toward men, significantly predict men's sociosexual orientation,  $F(2, 137) = 3.97, p = .02$ . Narcissism was positively correlated with sociosexual orientation ( $\beta =$

.18,  $p = .02$ ). However, hostile sexism toward men was not significantly associated with sociosexual orientation ( $\beta = .15, p = .09$ ). The two-way interaction between men's narcissism and hostile sexism toward men was not significant,  $F_{\text{change}}(3, 137) = .17, p = .69, R^2_{\text{change}} < .01$ .

### **Benevolent Sexism toward Men**

**Perceptions of Infidelity Scale.** In step one of the hierarchical regression, narcissism and benevolent sexism toward men did not significantly predict women's perceptions of infidelity, as measured by the Perceptions of Infidelity Scale,  $F(2, 168) = 2.22, p = .11$ . However, there was a significant negative correlation between women's benevolent sexism toward men and approval of infidelity ( $\beta = -.16, p = .04$ ). Women's narcissism did not significantly predict approval of infidelity ( $\beta = -.01, p = .88$ ). Step two of regression was not significant for women,  $F_{\text{change}}(3, 168) = .02, p = .89, R^2_{\text{change}} < .01$ .

For men, step one of the hierarchical regression, which included narcissism and benevolent sexism toward men, did not significantly predict men's perceptions of infidelity, as measured by the Perceptions of Infidelity Scale,  $F(2, 137) = .22, p = .80$ . The two-way interaction between narcissism and benevolent sexism was not significant for men,  $F_{\text{change}}(3, 137) = .17, p = .68, R^2_{\text{change}} < .01$ .

**Sociosexual Orientation Inventory.** In step one of the hierarchical regression, narcissism and benevolent sexism toward men did not significantly predict women's sociosexual orientation,  $F(2, 168) = .65, p = .52$ . Step two of the hierarchical was not significant,  $F_{\text{change}}(3, 168) = .85, p = .36, R^2_{\text{change}} < .01$ .

For men, step one of the hierarchical regression, which included narcissism and benevolent sexism toward men, was marginally significant in predicting men's sociosexual orientation,  $F(2, 137) = 2.76, p = .07$ . Men's narcissism was positively correlated with their sociosexual orientation, ( $\beta = .20, p = .02$ ). Benevolent sexism toward men was not significantly associated with sociosexual orientation, ( $\beta = .08, p = .34$ ). Step two of the regression was marginally significant,  $F_{\text{change}}(3, 137) = 3.11, p = .09, R^2_{\text{change}} = .02$ . The interaction between men's narcissism and benevolent sexism toward men was marginally significant ( $\beta = -.15, p = .09$ ). However, simple slope analyses (Preacher, 2006) testing for narcissism at 1 SD above and below the mean indicated that, indicated that the slopes were not significant for lower levels of endorsed benevolent sexism ( $b = -.01, p = .89$ ) or higher levels of benevolent sexism toward men ( $b = .07, p = .39$ ).

## DISCUSSION

While researchers have explored infidelity, romantic power, and sexism, no known studies have examined these constructs in relation to one another. The purpose of this study was to propose an integrated model that examines the moderating role of ambivalent sexism in the relationship between power and approval of one's own potential infidelity. Participants were randomly assigned to a high-power or low-power manipulation, adopted from previous research (Gallinsky et al., 2003; Gruenfeld et al., 2008; Lammers, et al., 2008) and slightly modified to address power in romantic contexts. This is the first known study to attempt an experimental manipulation of romantic power. Post-manipulation analyses revealed that participants in the high-power condition felt significantly more powerful than did those in the low-power condition. However, given that the range of power was below the mean, even for the high-power group, additional, exploratory, analyses utilizing participants' reported narcissism were conducted. The limitations of the power manipulation are discussed later on. The Narcissistic Personality Inventory served as a measure of trait measure of trait power due to the positive correlations between self-reported narcissism and personal power (Anderson et al., 2012; Brown & Zeigler-Hill, 2004; Dufner et al., 2013; Carlson et al., 2011). Also, given that little research has been conducted on men's experiences with sexism (Lee et al., 2010), we explored participants' sexist ideology toward men as well as women. Participants' attitudes of their own possible adulterous behaviors, which often predict acts of infidelity (Hackathorn et al., 2011; Solstad & Mucic, 1999; Treas & Giesen, 2000), served as the outcome measure.



It was hypothesized that the association between perceived power and permissive attitudes toward infidelity would vary according to participants' endorsement of hostile and benevolent sexism toward women and men. The hypotheses were partially supported, and the results revealed the importance of both participant gender and endorsed sexism toward men and women as predictors of permissive attitudes toward infidelity. Specifically, hostile sexism toward men and women moderated the relationship between perceived power and approval of uncommitted sexual relationships and infidelity. For participants low in sexism, power was predictive of attitudes toward adultery. However, when men and women endorsed greater hostile sexism toward the opposite gender, only their sexist ideology predicted approval of infidelity. Exploratory analyses utilizing participants' reported narcissism revealed that men's hostile sexism toward women marginally moderates the relationship between narcissism and approval of one's own uncommitted sexual relationships.

### **Gender and Approval of Infidelity**

Across various measures, men consistently held more permissive attitudes toward uncommitted sexual relationships and infidelity than did women, which is commensurate with previous research (Buunk & Bakker, 1995; Sheppard et al., 1995). It is widely theorized that heterosexual men may be less attracted to commitment and monogamy because they are not as likely to depend on women for resources (Pratto & Walker, 2004; Felmlee, 1994; Galliher et al., 1999). On the other hand, women, who often have limited access to socioeconomic resources (Pratto & Walker, 2004), are more economically and emotionally dependent on their partners (Felmlee, 1994; Pratto & Walker, 2004; Sprecher & Felmlee, 1997; Waller & Hill, 1951); this dependence may discourage infidelity.

While the gender differences regarding infidelity were expected and congruent with previous research, findings related to power and sexism were novel and sometimes dissimilar with the extant literature.

### **Power, Narcissism, and Approval of Infidelity**

**Power Manipulation.** In contrast to previous research citing a positive correlation between power and infidelity (Lammers et al., 2011), the results of this study suggest that, without moderation, power is not consistently associated with perceptions of infidelity or sociosexual orientation. Instead, power was related to infidelity variables only when it was moderated by hostilely sexist attitudes toward men and women. Therefore, any hypotheses predicting that power and infidelity would be correlated, regardless of sexist attitudes, were not supported. One reason for this lack of significance may be due to sample characteristics. Specifically, whereas the current study utilized college students, Lammers and colleagues assessed older, highly educated working professionals. Overall, these participants reported experiencing moderate to high levels of power, without undergoing any type of power prime.

Since power is often attained through age, education, and income (Atkins et al., 2001; Galliher et al., 1999; Pratto & Walker, 2004), it is possible that even the participants in the high-power condition of the current study felt less powerful than did the participants of Lammer's study; thus, the relationship between power and infidelity was not significant. As previously mentioned, although the power manipulation was significant, it did not push the high-power group above the mean. Therefore, the results of this study may have been different if more distance was created between the low- and high-power groups. It is also possible that when individuals are not inherently highly

powerful, attitudes that increase their sense of power, such as hostile sexism toward the opposite gender, play an important role in their permissiveness toward infidelity

**Narcissism.** Unlike the power analyses, when examining narcissism, higher narcissism in men predicted more approval of uncommitted sexual relationships. Perhaps men's narcissism is more closely linked to trait power, which is what Lammer's and colleagues (2011) appeared to assess. For undergraduate women, it is possible that their narcissism does not ensure access to socioeconomic resources, which may influence their approval of infidelity. Overall, the results suggested that state power, as primed by the power manipulation, did not influence attitudes toward infidelity whereas men's narcissism was positively associated with approval of one's own possible infidelity.

#### **Sexism toward Women and Attitudes toward Infidelity**

**Power Manipulation.** The proposed integrated model of power, sexism, and infidelity predicted that ambivalent sexism may moderate the relationship between power and approval of infidelity. When examining power, results revealed that neither gender, hostile sexism toward women, benevolent sexism toward women, nor power alone predicted sociosexual orientation, suggesting that these constructs do not function independently and must be conceptualized within an integrated framework. It is important to note that although the Sociosexual Orientation Inventory does not directly assess infidelity, favorable attitudes toward uncommitted sexual relationships, as assessed by this questionnaire, predict greater likelihood of sexual infidelity (Barta & Kiene, 2005; Seal et al., 1994).

Results suggested that hostile sexism toward women moderated power and infidelity such that participants who endorsed less hostile sexism toward women were

more approving of uncommitted sexual relationships, as their power increased. When examining men and women together, the combination of high power and low sexism predicted approval of casual sex and possibly infidelity. Perhaps less sexist individuals are more secure in their possession of power, such that they are not as worried about women gaining power over men; thus, the little sexist ideology that they endorse is not as influential on their permissiveness of adulterous behaviors as is their sense of power.

**Narcissism.** Similarly, when examining narcissism, there was a marginally significant, positive association between men's narcissism and approval of uncommitted sexual relationships when men endorsed less hostile sexism toward women. Perhaps men who are narcissistic largely allow their sense of power to dictate their attitudes toward infidelity. Although their sexist attitudes play a role, according to the moderated model, men's trait power may be the driving force when it comes to approval of uncommitted sex.

**Power Manipulation.** This begs the question of how stronger sexist attitudes influence the relationship between power and permissiveness toward infidelity. For those participants who endorsed higher levels of hostile sexism, their approval of uncommitted sexual relationships did not significantly fluctuate as their power increased. Also, examination of gender differences revealed that sexist attitudes dictated men's approval of uncommitted sexual relationships and, by extension, their increased likelihood of infidelity (Barta & Kiene, 2005; Seal et al., 1994). More specifically, when examining power, men were more approving of uncommitted sexual relationships as their hostile sexism increased. This finding was expected given that hostile sexism encourages male sexual prowess and discourages commitment to women, as it is believed that women

place a “tight leash” on men (Glick & Fiske, 1996, p. 500). In other words, hostilely sexist men may view monogamy as being related to women’s attempts to overpower their gender. By endorsing hostile sexism toward women, these men continue to uphold the patriarchal norms in society, which grant them power and status (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Hostilely sexist men may also endorse uncommitted, casual sexual relationships because they can engage in sexual activities without having to share their socioeconomic resources with women.

**Narcissism.** When examining narcissism, however, men’s sexist attitudes did not dictate their attitudes toward infidelity. Instead, men’s narcissism was positively associated with approval of uncommitted sexual relationships. These differences in findings between the power manipulation and participants’ reported narcissism may speak to the varying implications of trait versus state power. Perhaps due to its enduring, stable quality, trait power, as measured by narcissism, is a stronger predictor of men’s attitudes. For women, however, their narcissism was not associated with their attitudes toward infidelity. Instead, women’s sexist attitudes toward were associated with their approval of infidelity. It is possible that trait power may be influenced by gender as well as endorsement of sexist ideology.

**Power Manipulation.** When examining power, it was surprising that women’s hostile sexism toward women was not predictive of attitudes toward uncommitted sexual relationships given that sexist women are resentful of women’s abilities to gain power over men (Glicke & Fiske, 1997). Perhaps women who attend college possess more liberal views of sexuality, regardless of their sexist ideology. Aggregately, the results regarding sexism toward women suggest that for highly sexist individuals and

particularly for men, sexist ideology, rather than power, influences attitudes surrounding infidelity. For men and women who endorse less hostile sexism, however, their power interacts with their ideology to predict approval of uncommitted sexual relationships.

Unlike hostile sexism, benevolent sexism toward women did not predict men's approval of uncommitted sexual relationships. The proposed integrated model of infidelity hypothesized that benevolent sexism would negatively correlate with approval of infidelity among low-power men and women. It is possible that benevolent sexism's seemingly chivalrous and affectionate façade (Glick & Fiske, 1997) is incongruent with engaging in unemotional, uncommitted sex. Along those lines, previous research has found that when men endorse benevolent sexism, they are better able to manage conflicts with their partners than are hostilely sexist men (Overall et al., 2011). The ability to resolve conflicts often increases relationship satisfaction (Russell-Chapin, Chapin, & Sattler, 2001; Schneewind & Gerhard, 20012), which is negatively correlated with infidelity (Atkins et al., 2001). In other words, even if men's benevolently sexist attitudes toward women somehow influences their approval of uncommitted sexual relationships, this effect may be nullified by other consequences of the attitude, such as improved conflict resolution.

**Narcissism.** When examining narcissism, however, women's benevolent sexism toward women predicted their approval of infidelity. Specifically, as women's benevolent sexism increased, their approval of their own possible infidelity decreased. According to the ambivalent sexism theory, those who endorse benevolent sexism reward women who remain well within the boundaries of traditional gender roles, including remaining loyal and faithful to one's partner (Glick & Fiske, 1996). In addition, benevolent sexist

women's desire to be wholesome and virtuous women deserving of male praise may discourage infidelity.

### **Sexism toward Men and Approval of Infidelity**

**Power Manipulation.** The power analyses revealed that hostile sexism toward men moderated the relationship between power and infidelity. Specifically, less hostile sexism toward men predicted more approving attitudes toward infidelity as participants' power increased. It is possible that high-power and low sexist individuals are not as concerned about men gaining power over women, which perhaps allows their power to largely dictate permissiveness of adulterous behaviors. Results also indicated that participants who endorsed higher levels of hostile sexism toward men were less approving of infidelity as their power increased. Perhaps when men and women possess little power and resent men's dominance, they view infidelity as a means of gaining power. This may be especially true for women, who were more approving of infidelity as their hostile sexism toward men increased. When women are hostilely sexist toward men, they often begrudge men's ability to gain power (Glick & Fiske, 1999). Therefore, these women may view infidelity as a way of leveling the gendered playing field and retaliating against men's dominance.

Although it was hypothesized that benevolent sexism toward men would be negatively correlated with low-power women's approval of infidelity, when examining power, benevolent attitudes did not significantly moderate the relationship between power and infidelity. It is possible that benevolent sexist ideology is not as overtly powerful as hostile sexism toward men and thus, was not linked to infidelity.

**Narcissism.** When examining narcissism, a similar pattern of results emerged between women's hostile sexism toward men and approval of their own infidelity. Like the power manipulation, women who were more sexist toward men were more approving of their own possible infidelity. However, when examining benevolent sexism toward men, the results for the power manipulation and narcissism were dissimilar. The narcissism analyses showed that women who endorsed more benevolent attitudes toward men were less approving of their own possible infidelity. Perhaps these women are less likely to approve of their own infidelity because benevolent sexism toward men justifies women's domestic servitude of men (Glick & Fiske, 1999). Some of the disparate results obtained from the power and narcissism analyses may once again speak to the possible differences between trait and state power.

### **Responses to Measures of Infidelity**

**Power Manipulation.** An interesting and unexpected pattern emerged when participants' responses to the infidelity variables were examined within the context of the power manipulation. While hostile sexism toward women predicted approval of uncommitted sexual relationships on the Sociosexual Orientation Inventory, hostile sexism toward men predicted approval of infidelity on the Perceptions of Dating Infidelity Scale. It is possible that these two measures capture different aspects of infidelity. For example, the Sociosexual Orientation Inventory largely assesses non-traditional sexuality (e.g., sex without love, "casual" sex, sexual fantasies about strangers). On the other hand, the Perceptions of Dating Infidelity Scale focuses mainly on emotional infidelity (e.g., withholding information from one's partner, buying or accepting gifts from extradyadic partners, traveling with extradyadic partners) with little



focus on sexual betrayals. Evolutionary theories of mating and jealousy, which attempt to explain gender-differentiated reactions to infidelity (Berman & Frazier, 2005; Buss, Larsen, Westen & Semmelroth, 1992; Mattingly et al., 2010), may partially explain the findings regarding sexism and approval of sexual versus largely emotional infidelity. Many studies have found that emotional infidelity, which is often defined as the development of an extradyadic emotional bond, is more distressing for women while sexual infidelity is more distressing for men (Buss et al., 1992; Shackelford et al., 2002).

In general, men are less restricted in their sociosexual orientation than women (Schmitt, 2005), which suggests that men prefer uncommitted sexual relationships with little or no emotional investment to a greater extent than women (Simpson & Gangestad, 1991). At the same time, unrestricted sociosexuality is positively associated with distress about the sexual infidelity of one's partner (Tregger & Sprecher, 2011). Perhaps men who are sociosexually unrestricted and endorse hostile sexism approve of their own sexual infidelity because they presume that women will find it as distressing as they do. In other words, for these men, sexual infidelity may be a means to maintaining power over women by inflicting the most amount of distress. A similar explanation may help explain why women who were hostilely sexist toward men endorsed more approval of emotional infidelity. Since women in general find emotional infidelity to be more distressing than sexual infidelity (Buss et al., 1992; Shackelford et al., 2002), women who endorse sexism toward men and are resentful of men's power may utilize emotional infidelity as retaliation against men's dominance.

In the context of gender differences, it appears as though when men and women hold sexist attitudes toward the other gender, they are more likely to approve of the type

of infidelity that they perceive to be the most distressing. Interestingly, this pattern also emerged when examining power and narcissism. Currently, there are no known studies examining whether or not men and women are generally aware of these gender differences in response to various types of infidelity. It is possible that each gender has little insight into the types of infidelity that the other gender finds to be the most distressing.

It is also important to note that the possession of power interacted with hostile sexism to predict the approval of sexual versus emotional infidelity when examining men and women together; this suggests that the evolutionary theory of mating and jealousy may not fully explain the current findings. It is clear, however, that the combination of possessing power, which encourages sexual approach behaviors (Maner et al., 2012; Kunstan & Maner, 2011), and endorsing hostilely sexist attitudes, whether it is toward one's own or opposite gender, predicts approval of infidelity variables.

### **Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

While this is the first known study to examine power, infidelity, and ambivalent sexism in relation to one another, its findings are not without limitations. Despite utilizing an experimental manipulation of power, the correlational analyses prevent causal assertions. Regarding the power manipulation, it is possible that the prime evoked participant's memories of past sexual indiscretions, which may lead to feelings of guilt or empathy. If such strong emotions were unintentionally evoked during the prime, they likely influenced the manner in which participants responded to the questionnaires. When conducting power primes, future research will likely benefit from assessing emotional states, other than power, that are evoked. Future research may also examine gender

differences in the effectiveness of power manipulations. It is possible that, emotional socialization (Shields et al., 2006), which encourages men, but not women, to express agentic and powerful emotions, may influence how each gender report self-perceived power. In addition, as previously mentioned, the high-power group did not report feeling more powerful than the mean value of the power manipulation. Although statistically significant, the distance between the low- and high-power groups was not particularly large. To supplement the power analyses, trait power was measured through participants' reported narcissism. Previous research has shown that stable, characterological traits, such as narcissism, are positively correlated with power (Anderson et al., 2012).

Another limitation of this study may be the use of the Sociosexual Orientation Inventory. While sociosexual orientation is predictive of sexual infidelity (Barta & Kiene, 2005; Seal et al., 1994), it is difficult to determine whether participants were directly thinking about infidelity as they responded to the Sociosexual Orientation Inventory. However, this concern is somewhat offset by the use of the Perceptions of Dating Infidelity Scale, which reliably measured participants' explicit attitudes toward infidelity.

In addition, the focus of the current study was on participants' attitudes toward their own possible extradyadic behaviors. Therefore, the results do not shed light on participants' perceptions of infidelity in general or infidelity committed by their own partners. Future studies should examine whether attitudes toward one's own actions or toward others' actions is more predictive of infidelity.

As discussed earlier, this study's sample consisted of mainly young, Caucasian college students attending a private, Catholic University. Therefore, further research is

needed to determine whether the findings from this study generalize to other populations. For example, certain aspects of infidelity, such as divorce and extramarital sex, may only pertain to the dominant, heterosexual society. Among some gay men, sexual relations that occur outside of one's primary relationship, known as nonmonogamy, are perceived to be a political statement rejecting the social norms, rather than an adulterous act (Greenan & Tunnell, 2003). It is also currently unknown how ambivalent sexism influences same-sex couples and individuals from various backgrounds. Further research utilizing post-collegiate and non-homogenous samples may help determine which populations are most vulnerable to and negatively influenced by ambivalently sexist beliefs.

It is also important to note that culturally shared beliefs influence how power is defined and perceived within intimate relationships (Harvey & Bird, 2004). For example, exploratory studies examining African American (Harvey & Bird, 2004) and Mexican American couples (Harvey, Beckman, Browner, & Sherman, 2002) found that the underpinnings of power that are salient for Caucasians may not necessarily apply to individuals of other racial or ethnic backgrounds; this uncertainty of generalizability impedes our full understanding of the practical and psychological implications of power imbalances in various types of relationships.

In addition, it is difficult to determine whether state or trait power plays a substantial role in romantic contexts. Since power is largely relative to others and may increase as one attains education and income (Atkins et al., 2001; Galliher et al., 1999; Pratto & Walker, 2004), it is expected that one's sense of power oscillates. However, some researchers suggest that one's personal sense of power remains moderately consistent across various social contexts (Anderson et al., 2012). This may occur because

stable, characterological traits consistently maintain or diminish an overall sense of power. For example, self-focused autonomy, which is the pursuit of independence at the cost of social and romantic connections (Neff & Harter, 2002), and narcissism (Anderson et al., 2012) are positively correlated with power. However, dispositional anxiety diminishes the approach and agentic behaviors that accompany power (Maner et al., 2012). Consistent self-monitoring of personal power can also influence one's perceptions of their own power as well as the amount of power that others possess (Oyamot, Fuglestad, & Snyder, 2010). Some of the dissimilar results stemming from the power manipulation and narcissism questionnaire in the current study may be attributed to the differences between state and trait power.

### **Clinical Implications**

Despite this study's limitations, its findings begin to bridge a gap in the research and clinical treatment of power inequities, sexism, and infidelity. More specifically, the current study documents the centrality of hostile sexism in maintaining the relationship between power and approval of infidelity. Understanding ambivalent sexism's many effects on romantic relationship is important because interventions that reduce sexism within romantic contexts are warranted. Recent studies have found that many young men and women find ambivalent sexism to be an attractive trait of potential intimate partners (Bohner, Ahlborn, & Steiner, 2010; Montañés, de Lemus, Moya, Bohner, & Megías, 2013). One promising intervention may be in the form of mindfulness (defined as the practice of attending to the present in a non-judgmental manner; Kabat-Zinn, 2003), which has been found to reduce sexism toward women (Gervais & Hoffman, 2012). Given that sexist attitudes appear to influence one's propensity to engage in infidelity,

interventions aimed at reducing sexism may take on important roles in the practice of couples therapy.

At a broader level, the need to incorporate a comprehensive, macrosystem lens to better understand the etiology of infidelity is essential, especially given that traditional clinical interventions for infidelity often do not consider gendered and cultural power (Williams & Knudson-Martin, 2012). Currently, many mental health professionals assume that partners in romantic relationships are equal and thus, infidelity is largely conceptualized without consideration of societal issues that influence intimate interactions. Since clinical psychologists report that infidelity is one of the most difficult problems to address and treat (Gordon et al., 2004), some treatment models of infidelity may benefit from widening their scope to include factors outside of the romantic relationship that encourage or discourage adulterous behaviors (Williams & Knudson-Martin, 2012). As empirical findings continue to call attention to gendered power and its relationship to infidelity, clinical interventions aimed at reducing the likelihood of infidelity or helping couples recover from past indiscretions may improve.

## CONCLUSION

The present study is the first to investigate of power, ambivalent sexism, and approval of infidelity as an integrated model. The results of this study suggest that hostile sexism toward men and women moderate the relationship between state power and approval of uncommitted sexual relationships and infidelity. For men, hostile sexism toward women marginally moderates the relationship between narcissism and approval of uncommitted sexual relationships. Aggregately, these findings encourage the conceptualization of infidelity through a multi-factorial, integrated model. Armed with the knowledge of possible societal issues, such as sexism and gendered power, that may encourage infidelity, psychotherapists can better prevent the dissolution of numerous romantic relationships.

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