

The Global Decline in Sexism: A Multilevel Meta-Analytic Review of Trends in Countries' Hostile Sexism, Benevolent Sexism, and Gender Inequality Over Time

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The continued prevalence of sexism and gender inequalities across the world is a priority for research. We meta-analyzed all research since the inception of ambivalent sexism theory (1996–2023) that measured hostile sexism (i.e., derogatory attitudes) or benevolent sexism (i.e., patronizing attitudes) toward women. Using 1,097 samples from 81 countries, we considered evidence for principles of ambivalent sexism theory, including the extent to which endorsements of hostile sexism and benevolent sexism (a) differed across years, (b) were associated with one another, and (c) were associated with countries' gender inequalities. Multilevel meta-analytic models indicated that endorsement of sexism generally followed trajectories of small declines over years, provided robust evidence that sexism is "ambivalent" because hostile sexism was consistently associated with greater benevolent sexism, and suggested that people's greater endorsement of hostile sexism in a country predicted greater gender inequality in that country, although this association was attenuated in later samples. Implications of these tests informed theoretical gaps in need of research: investigating why the declining trajectories of sexism were stronger in some countries relative to others, identifying the most appropriate markers of gender inequality, and specifying the time lags between experienced inequalities and endorsement of sexism. Our multilevel meta-analysis provided initial information about the cross-country patterns of ambivalent sexism and established a need for longitudinal cultural research to identify the origins of ambivalent sexism and its consequences for gender inequalities across the world.

Public Significance Statement

Analyzing results from hundreds of studies from 81 countries, we affirmed the theory that people who hold hostile sexist beliefs simultaneously hold patronizing sexist beliefs that idealize women. Higher hostile sexism in a country was moderately associated with greater gender inequalities in that country (e.g., worse reproductive health and employment for women). People's endorsement of both forms of sexist beliefs appears to decrease each year, and we need more research into the mechanisms of this decline.

Keywords: ambivalent sexism theory, cultures, countries, equality, egalitarianism

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Gender norms appear more egalitarian than ever before. Worldwide economic development has spurred people to pursue individualistic goals and endorse ideals of personal choice (e.g., Greenfield, 2016; Inglehart et al., 2017). Yet, despite a century of action toward women's political and economic emancipation, gender inequalities remain persistent and prevalent. A *United Nations Development Programme* (2022) special report recognized gender inequalities as one of the current "threats to human security," and even after countries' coordinated intervention over decades, *gendered pay gaps* and *gendered violence* remain research priorities (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2022). Ambivalent sexism theory (Glick & Fiske, 1996) illustrates how these outcomes are partly caused by two forms of sexism that emerge across cultures: Hostile sexism is antagonistic and aggressive toward women, whereas benevolent sexism is paternalistic and condescending toward women. However, fundamental principles of ambivalent sexism theory need more evidence. First, hostile sexism and benevolent sexism should be prevalent, and positively associated, across cultures (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Second, people's ambivalent sexism should arise in conditions of greater gender inequalities (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Glick et al., 2000). Third, hostile sexism and benevolent sexism should both function to "maintain gender inequality" (e.g., Glick et al., 2000, p. 765; Lamarche et al., 2020, 107781; Sibley & Overall, 2011, p. 303). These three principles are prohibitively difficult to test because they require evidence spanning countries and years.

Of the thousands of studies citing Glick and Fiske's (1996) foundational work, only three cross-sectional studies tested the link between ambivalent sexism toward women and societal gender inequality across multiple countries (i.e., Glick et al., 2000, 2004; Zawisza et al., 2025). Specifically, Glick et al.'s (2000, 2004) seminal multinational studies suggested that people's endorsement of ambivalent sexism was highest in the most gender-unequal countries, and despite not having sufficient statistical power to identify country-level associations, the pattern of results was affirmed in a sample of 62 countries (Zawisza et al., 2025). Nonetheless, recent reviews of ambivalent sexism theory highlight the critical lack of data from multiple countries over multiple years (Bareket & Fiske, 2023; Barreto & Doyle, 2023). Specifically, no research has (a) examined how hostile sexism and benevolent sexism might differ across countries *and* over time or (b) tested the extent to which those patterns of hostile sexism and benevolent sexism over time are associated with indices of countries' gender inequality. We conducted a meta-analysis of all available empirical studies on people's endorsement of hostile sexism and benevolent sexism, spanning 1,097 studies from the inception of the measure in 1996 through 2023. We leveraged each sample's measurements of ambivalent sexism as approximate indicators of sexist attitudes in that country at that time, evidence which has implications for estimating the trajectories of hostile sexism and benevolent sexism over years, the ambivalent structure of sexist attitudes, and the claim that ambivalent sexism both reflects and maintains gender inequalities.

The Ambivalent Structure of Hostile Sexism and Benevolent Sexism

Ambivalent sexism theory conceptualizes sexism as two distinct yet interrelated sets of valenced attitudes toward women (Glick & Fiske, 1996). *Hostile sexism* is an ideology that represents women as

seeking to undermine men's societal advantages, including by sexually manipulating men or falsely claiming discrimination (e.g., "Women seek power by getting control over men"; Glick & Fiske, 1996). *Benevolent sexism* is a patronizing and sometimes positive-sounding ideology, encompassing a representation of women as needing protection, reverence, and having the capacity to romantically "fulfill" men (e.g., "A good woman should be set on a pedestal by her man"; Glick & Fiske, 1996). Hostile sexism and benevolent sexism both limit progress toward gender equality. To illustrate, people's hostile sexism predicts greater acceptance of violence toward women in relationships, greater workplace discrimination toward women, and a heightened preference for men over women in leadership roles (Agadullina et al., 2022; Bock et al., 2017; Glick, 2019; Masser & Abrams, 2004). By contrast, benevolent sexism more covertly undermines women's autonomy. People's expressions of benevolent sexism might appear caring and kind, but they are directed toward women who conform to expected relationship-focused roles (e.g., Cikara et al., 2009; Hopkins-Doyle et al., 2019), are expressed to rationalize derogation toward feminists or women in career roles (e.g., Glick et al., 1997), and undermine women's independent goal pursuits (e.g., Hammond & Overall, 2015; Hideg & Ferris, 2016).

The structure of people's sexist attitudes is generally "ambivalent"—hostile sexism and benevolent sexism are positively correlated. One reason is because people's endorsement of hostile sexism is often costly for the people who endorse it. For instance, heterosexual men's endorsement of hostile sexism is linked with lower relational well-being, including greater difficulties in finding and maintaining satisfying relationships (Bareket et al., 2018; Cross & Overall, 2019; Hammond et al., 2020; Overall et al., 2011). By expressing benevolent sexism (e.g., particular care, devotion, and chivalry toward women), men can mitigate these interpersonal costs because these expressions appear antithetical to hostile sexism and overlap with desirable qualities in a romantic partner (Hammond & Overall, 2017; Hopkins-Doyle et al., 2019; Overall et al., 2011). By the same logic, hostile sexism is costly when it is normatively rejected in society, including when legal protections punish gender discrimination in public, workplace, and domestic spheres (Glick et al., 2000). People's endorsement of benevolent sexism is also theorized to maintain gender inequalities in relatively subtle ways and thus work in tandem with the overt antagonism of hostile sexism. For example, workplace paternalism is less easily identified or confronted as "discrimination"; managers higher in benevolent sexism tend to withhold challenging tasks from women, therefore offering fewer opportunities for women to develop and demonstrate their skills (King et al., 2012; see Hideg & Shen, 2019, for a review). Accordingly, hostile sexism and benevolent sexism are positively associated—both when measuring individuals' attitudes and when measuring normative societal attitudes (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Glick et al., 2000).

The positive association between hostile sexism and benevolent sexism should nonetheless vary according to personal characteristics and contexts. Stronger ambivalence is theorized to emerge as a function of people needing to resolve cognitive dissonance (Glick et al., 1997, 2000): People's endorsement of hostile sexism can clash with their needs to maintain positive self-views or conform to social norms, requiring compensatory endorsement of benevolent sexism (e.g., "I can't be sexist, I love and support the women in my life"). Accordingly, the correlation between hostile sexism and benevolent

sexism should be stronger for (a) women compared to men and (b) countries with lower gender inequality compared to countries with higher gender inequality. First, women, relative to men, experience heightened dissonance when holding sexist attitudes toward the ingroup of women (Becker, 2010). Accordingly, the connection between hostile sexism and benevolent sexism is more prominent for women (Glick et al., 2000; Hammond et al., 2018; Sibley & Becker, 2012). Furthermore, evidence indicates the within-person fluctuations of hostile sexism and benevolent sexism over time are associated for women but not for men (Osborne & Little, 2023). Second, in countries with more egalitarian norms, hostile sexism should be more closely paired with benevolent sexism because hostility is particularly dissonant and less effective at maintaining inequalities. Extant evidence is consistent with this claim: Hostile sexism appears more strongly correlated with benevolent sexism in countries with lower gender inequality (Glick et al., 2000, 2004; Zawisza et al., 2025). In sum, the *ambivalence* of hostile sexism and benevolent sexism is fundamental to the theorized structure of attitudes, and the positive association between the two should emerge more strongly for women and for people in more egalitarian contexts.

Gender Inequality Is a Source of Ambivalent Sexism

In countries with greater gender inequality—indexed by men's greater advantages over women in the economic, political, and health metrics for a country (United Nations Development Programme, 2024)—people are theorized to endorse benevolent sexism and hostile sexism more strongly. The stereotype content model states that the foundation of people's stereotypes is their perceptions of the cooperation between social groups *and* social groups' relative status (Fiske et al., 2002). First, men's advantaged access to status, income, and legislative power in societies forms the basis of hostile sexism—envious attitudes that express fears about threatening women stealing power away from men (Fiske et al., 2002; Glick & Fiske, 1996). Second, beliefs that women are fundamental to fulfilling men's needs for emotional closeness, heterosexual romance, and sexual reproduction form the basis of benevolent sexism—attitudes that emphasize women's unmatched warmth but lower competence (Fiske et al., 2002; Glick & Fiske, 1996). In conditions of more extreme gender inequality, the intergroup tensions around cooperation and status are intensified, feeding beliefs of women's unique support for men's advantaged societal position *and* feeding beliefs that men's advantages are vulnerable to attack. Accordingly, people in countries with higher gender inequality should, on average, endorse hostile sexism and benevolent sexism more strongly.

Other major theories share the principle that gender inequality should foster greater ambivalent sexism. Social role theory states that people observe women's overrepresentation in lower status/communal roles (e.g., nurses) versus men's overrepresentation in higher status/agentic roles (e.g., corporate executives), and then infer corresponding traits about those groups (e.g., women are nurturing whereas men are ambitious; Eagly & Steffen, 1984; Koenig & Eagly, 2014). Similarly, status construction theory posits that people experience status differences between gender groups, such as seeing challenging tasks being assigned to men over women in the workplace (Ridgeway, 2001). These experiences of status inequalities lead people to mutually construct and endorse stereotypes that rationalize the differences between women and men

(Ridgeway, 2001). Finally, system justification theory emphasizes that people have a fundamental motivation to view the world as fair, a motivation that can be dissonant with their experiences of gender inequalities (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost et al., 2008). To resolve this dissonance, people adopt attitudes that justify those inequalities, such as hostile sexist characterizations that gender pay gaps are due to women's lack of ambition or benevolently sexist rationalizations that women receive compensatory benefits in other domains (Kay et al., 2009). In sum, multiple theories predict that people's experiences of living in countries with greater gender inequalities should prompt greater endorsement of both hostile sexism and benevolent sexism.

Robust experimental evidence supports the claim that people's experiences of gender inequality foster their endorsement of sexism. One process involves people aligning their attitudes to justify, rather than combat, societal inequalities. For example, in an experiment that led participants to believe that current social inequalities are stable or particularly influential on their lives, the exposure to information about societal gender inequalities (e.g., low proportions of women in CEO positions) resulted in participants believing that women are less competent in those roles (Kay et al., 2009). Experiments also illustrate an inverted pattern—participants presented with information that society was changing to be more egalitarian were more egalitarian in their gender attitudes. Specifically, people who read that men will increasingly become nurses and that women will increasingly become business professionals subsequently expected society to view men as more nurturing and view women as more intelligent (Koenig & Eagly, 2014). Although experimental studies are consistent with the claim that people align their gender attitudes with perceived societal conditions, experimental paradigms rely on delivering manipulated information to participants. Thus, theory lacks evidence about whether the real-world experiences of gender inequalities in a country correspond to differences in people's endorsement of ambivalent sexism.

Cross-sectional studies have sought evidence that connects societal gender inequalities with people's endorsement of ambivalent sexism. Glick et al. (2000) provided the first evidence for the presence and association of hostile sexism and benevolent sexism across 19 countries. Women's and men's endorsement of sexism was higher in countries with higher scores on the United Nations' indices of gender inequality (e.g., Cuba, South Africa, and Nigeria) and lower in countries with relatively lower gender inequality (e.g., Belgium, Australia, and England), although most associations were nonsignificant due to the low sample size at the country level (Glick et al., 2000, 2004). A subsequent 62-nation cross-sectional study affirmed these patterns—societal hostile sexism and benevolent sexism were each correlated with greater societal gender inequality as measured by the Global Gender Gap Index (Zawisza et al., 2025). In addition, pairwise comparison of countries' sexist attitudes offers suggestive evidence that people's endorsement of ambivalent sexism is relatively higher in countries that typically score higher on indices of gender inequality, such as Poland versus the United Kingdom (Zawisza et al., 2015), Turkey versus South Korea (Tekkas et al., 2020), or Romania versus Italy (Rollero et al., 2023). Altogether, the basis of current cross-cultural theorizing (see Bareket & Fiske, 2023; Barreto & Doyle, 2023) relies on inference from cross-sectional correlations between ambivalent sexism toward women and country-level indicators of inequality.

The Protection Racket Effect

Intimidation of women, violence toward women, and restrictions on women's independence are theorized to make benevolent sexism more appealing to women. Labeled the "protection racket effect" (Glick & Fiske, 2001b, p. 181), benevolent sexism offers women protection and provision from threats, violence, and discrimination—despite being a primary contributor to the harm and restrictions that made those offers of protection and provision appealing in the first place. One interpretation of the *protection racket* is that women's benevolent sexism is theorized to align more closely with men's benevolent sexism in more hostile contexts (Glick et al., 2000). Indeed, in countries where men more strongly endorse hostile sexism, the gap between women's and men's endorsement of benevolent sexism minimizes and sometimes reverses; that is, women endorse benevolent sexism to the same extent or more strongly than men (Glick et al., 2000; Zawisza et al., 2025). In sum, in the context of gendered hostilities, women's and men's benevolent sexism become more coregulated, perhaps because women closely affiliate with men's protective attitudes or because women establish more stringent protective prescriptions in an effort to "pull up" men's endorsement of benevolent sexism. This interpretation of the protection racket emphasizes that gaps between women's and men's endorsement of benevolent sexism shrink in the presence of men's hostile sexism.

Another interpretation of the *protection racket* effect is that women defensively endorse benevolent sexism in response to threats, including physical, psychological, or economic harm. For instance, when women in the United States read manipulated information about men's high antipathy toward women, they subsequently reported a stronger endorsement of benevolent sexism (Fischer, 2006). Similarly, women's beliefs that men are deserving of high-status roles predicted stronger endorsement of benevolent sexism, mediated by believing they personally needed men's provision and protection (Radke et al., 2018; also see Vial & Napier, 2017). Thus, the second possibility of the protection racket effect is that societal indicators of gendered harm and discrimination (e.g., greater maternal mortality, greater gender pay gaps) predict women's benevolent sexism outright. In the current research, we examine these two possible interpretations of the protection racket effect. We test the extent to which men's hostile sexism or indicators of societal gender inequality are associated with the gap between women's and men's endorsement of benevolent sexism and/or women's endorsement of benevolent sexism in general.

Ambivalent Sexism Functions to Maintain Gender Inequalities

The links between ambivalent sexism and gender inequalities are theorized to be bidirectional: Conditions of gender inequalities give rise to ambivalent sexism, but in turn, people's endorsement of sexist attitudes is harmful and fosters acceptance of inequalities (Bareket & Fiske, 2023). A repeated claim in this corpus is that ambivalent sexism "perpetuates gender discrimination" (Connor et al., 2017, p. 356), "serves to justify and perpetuate male privilege" (Barreto & Doyle, 2023, p. 100), and functions to "maintain gender inequality" (e.g., Glick et al., 2000, p. 765). However, the best evidence for the prediction that ambivalent sexism predicts gender inequalities across countries and across time is an

approximation: An analogous measure for hostile sexism from 57 countries in the World Values Survey (WVS; e.g., agreement that "men make better political leaders than women") predicted residualized decreases in those countries' gender equality index 3 years later (Brandt, 2011). However, the WVS does not assess benevolent sexism, the "pernicious" form of sexism theorized to be relevant for understanding inequalities in egalitarian societies (Barreto et al., 2010; Glick & Fiske, 2001a, p. 537). People's endorsement of hostile sexism and benevolent sexism should *each* produce beliefs and behaviors that function to maintain societal gender inequality.

People's endorsement of hostile sexism and benevolent sexism restricts women's opportunities in career domains, political rights and representation, and access to health care. First, sexist attitudes undermine women's opportunities in career domains. People who endorse hostile sexism express more overt discrimination toward women in managerial roles (e.g., Christopher & Wojda, 2008; Masser & Abrams, 2004). By contrast, people who endorse benevolent sexism more subtly undermine women's workplace successes, such as by selectively promoting work–family balance to women and assigning challenging career opportunities to men (e.g., King et al., 2012; see Hideg & Shen, 2019, for a review). Second, people who endorse hostile sexism and benevolent sexism tend to hold politically restrictive ideologies that limit minoritized groups' political rights and participation (Sibley, Wilson, & Duckitt, 2007), including preferences to vote for politicians who are men (e.g., Ratliff et al., 2019; Winter, 2023). Third, people who endorse hostile sexism and benevolent sexism oppose women's (but not men's) autonomy over health care decisions, including being more controlling of pregnant women's behaviors (e.g., Sutton et al., 2011), expressing lower support for access to abortion (e.g., Huang et al., 2016), and stigmatizing women who seek medical treatment (Gattino et al., 2020; also see Dyer et al., 2023). In sum, people's greater endorsement of ambivalent sexism inhibits women's career success, political representation, and health care access—all of which are constituents of *gender inequality* as indexed by the United Nations (United Nations Development Programme, 2024).

Finally, people's endorsement of ambivalent sexism also limits progress toward egalitarianism by promoting acceptance of current inequalities. People's endorsement of benevolent sexism fosters acceptance of inequality, consistent with several theories' position that gender attitudes rationalize men's disproportionate access to positions of status and influence (e.g., Eagly & Steffen, 1984; Jost & Banaji, 1994; Ridgeway, 2001). Specifically, benevolent sexism rationalizes men's societal access to resources and status, including portraying men as using their privilege to provide for their families or to protect others (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Glick & Fiske, 2001a). Empirical findings illustrate that women and men who endorse benevolent sexism generally rate their society as equal for gender groups, such as believing that women and men have relatively fair opportunities for success (e.g., Connelly & Heesacker, 2012; Hammond & Sibley, 2011). In turn, accepting society as "fair" predicts relatively lower motivation to protest and relatively greater life satisfaction, a particularly strong effect for women (Becker & Wright, 2011; Hammond & Sibley, 2011). The rationalizations of benevolent sexism even extend to outcomes that are counterintuitive to the protective content of the ideology, such as fostering acceptance of violence toward women. People who endorse benevolent sexism attribute greater blame to victims of

assault (e.g., [Sakalli-Uğurlu et al., 2007](#)) and express more tolerance of men's domestic violence ([Agadullina et al., 2022](#); [Sengupta et al., 2024](#)). In sum, greater societal endorsement of sexism should inhibit the progress toward gender equality.

The Current Research

We meta-analyzed people's endorsement of ambivalent sexism over its 27-year lifetime (1996–2023). We treated measures of hostile sexism and benevolent sexism from published studies, theses, or databases as indicators of sexism in that country and at that time. We acknowledge that nationally representative and random sampling is ideal (e.g., the WVS). However, our research goals prioritized measuring *both* hostile sexism and benevolent sexism, not yet measured in any multinational longitudinal panel study. We considered our meta-analytic evidence as initial (rather than conclusive) tests of fundamental theoretical principles about the structure, sources, and functions of ambivalent sexism.

We first modeled the differences in women's and men's endorsement of hostile sexism and benevolent sexism over 27 years of empirical research (*Primary Analysis 1*). Primary Analysis 1 developed a theory with novel evidence about the extent to which the trajectories of sexist attitudes increase versus decrease over time. Next, we modeled the strength of the associations between hostile sexism and benevolent sexism for women and men, including possible differences over time (*Primary Analysis 2*). Primary Analysis 2 developed a theory on the extent to which sexism is "ambivalent," including whether ambivalence is relatively stronger for women and/or for countries with lower gender inequality. Third, we conducted tests derived from the theory that unequal social conditions are a source of people's endorsement of sexism and, in turn, that sexist attitudes function to maintain gender inequalities. Specifically, we modeled the extent to which indices of countries' gender inequality predicted the endorsement of sexism in samples from those countries (*Primary Analysis 3a*), and vice versa, the extent to which samples' sexism predicted countries' gender inequality (*Primary Analysis 3b*). Finally, these latter analyses included an additional test of the "protection racket effect": We modeled the extent to which the gender gap in endorsement of benevolent sexism is narrowed in conditions of higher hostile sexism and/or gender inequalities.

Method

Transparency and Openness

We followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses guidance ([Page et al., 2021](#)) and the Meta-Analysis Reporting Standards guidelines for reporting meta-analyses ([Appelbaum et al., 2018](#)). Our research goals, search strategy, and inclusion/exclusion criteria were preregistered. The preregistration, data, analysis code, and research materials are available on the Open Science Framework ([Hammond & Karl, 2025](#)). Differences from the preregistration are summarized in Table 1.

Search Strategy

The first and second authors searched for the term "ambivalent sexism inventory" (ASI) in publications from 1996 to 2023 (inclusive) in Google Scholar, ProQuest, ProQuest Dissertations, Scopus, and Web of Science.¹ Search and screening waves occurred

in August–December 2022 and May–June 2024. This search term identified any available study—including papers/theses, technical reports, preprints, and conference reports—that either measured the ASI and/or contained an English-language citation of [Glick and Fiske \(1996\)](#) published on or before December 31, 2023 (including online publication ahead of print). Samples were included if they reported the mean and standard deviation of hostile sexism and/or benevolent sexism and/or the correlation between hostile sexism and benevolent sexism. Samples were excluded if (a) the ASI measurement occurred after an experimental manipulation or intervention; (b) the target sample was people with diverse sexualities, for which the ASI has not been validated (see [Cross et al., 2021](#); [Glick, 2023](#)); or (c) the target sample was people who were violent offenders in treatment.

Data Screening

Our search followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses model ([Figure 1](#)). Most reports matching the search term did not pass the screening stage (e.g., abstracts indicated a qualitative study, a review, or legal scholarship). Of the reports assessed for eligibility, the highest number of exclusions was coded as "unavailable" due to lacking necessary information for the meta-analysis (i.e., descriptive statistics or information on scale points). In some of those cases, data were unavailable because the ASI was included as a filler task or footnoted as a supplementary test. However, many reports failed to make descriptive statistics available as required by APA reporting standards. Finally, some reports cited the ASI for another purpose, including qualitative research or adaptations of the ASI for other purposes (e.g., indexing experiences of sexism, developing vignettes of sexism, assessing sexism toward specific social groups), and were coded as ASI "not measured."

Data Extraction

Data were extracted by the first and second authors by recording means, standard deviations, and correlations on an Excel spreadsheet for hostile sexism and benevolent sexism. We also recorded characteristics of the measures (i.e., language, number of items, possible scale range, reliabilities) and samples (i.e., sample country, student sample, online sample). For all papers that indicated supplementary materials or open data, we also searched those sources to supply the required information. Data on the country-level indices of inequality for years up to and including 2022 (i.e., data published in the most recently available report; [United Nations Development Programme, 2024](#)) were obtained from the United Nations Human Development data center ([United Nations Development Programme, n.d.](#)): the

¹ The Web of Science search comprised the following database subscriptions: Arts and Humanities Citation Index, Conference Proceedings Citation Index, Conference Proceedings Citation Index—Social Sciences and Humanities Edition, Emerging Sources Citation Index, MEDLINE, Social Sciences Citation Index, Book Citation Index (Science + Social Sciences), KCI-Korean Journal Database, Russian Science Citation Index, SciELO Citation Index, BIOSIS Citation Index, Chemical Collection (Index Chemicus + Current Chemical Reactions), Current Contents Connect Collection, Book Citation Index (Science + Social Sciences), CAB Abstracts On CABI, and Science Citation Index Expanded.

Table 1
Summary of Changes Following the Preregistration

| Preregistration plan | Change | Reason |
|---|---|--|
| Method: Grand-mean centering variables. | Year remains centered on the midpoint. All other predictors were z -scored. | Required to reach convergence in the random-effects models. |
| Search strategy: Timeframe of data from “1996–2021.” | Extended to “1996–2023.” | Using the latest full-year data at the time of article revision, recommended in the peer-review process. |
| Search strategy: Databases. | Now also includes manuscripts and data in https://osf.io/ and PsyArXiv. | Expansion of search recommended in peer review. |
| Data extraction: Inequality indices extracted from United Nations reports. | Data obtained from the United Nations Human Development data center. | The data center was made accessible after the date of preregistration; indices were available for all years, rather than exclusively for years of published reports. |
| Analysis: Latent growth curve models assessing associations between trajectories. | Multilevel meta-analysis models estimating year as a random effect. | Growth curve models failed to converge. We opted for an alternative strategy recommended in peer review: multilevel meta-analysis including random effects for intercepts and slopes (where possible). |
| Primary Analysis 2: Regressing sexism on indicators on inequality. | Adding a test predicting the sample-level differences between men’s and women’s endorsement of benevolent sexism. | This analysis tests the “Protection Racket” as described in Glick et al. (2000) , recommended in peer review. |
| Primary Analysis 3: Assessing United Nations scores of countries’ GEM. | Replaced with the United Nations scores of countries’ GII. | The GII was introduced in 2010 as a measure of gender inequality that superseded the GEM. |

Note. GII = Gender Inequality Index; GEM = Gender Empowerment Measure.

Gender Inequality Index (GII), Gender Development Index (GDI), and Human Development Index (HDI).

Reliability

Due to the large number of included studies, we assessed the reliability of data extraction by double-coding extracted data from a random selection of 50 included samples. Out of 1,030 entered points of data for those samples, coders had perfect agreement on 982 (95.3%). Data on the means, standard deviations, country, and sample type had perfect agreement. Coder disagreement occurred in 19 cases: scale reliabilities ($N = 4; <1\%$), sample size ($N = 7; <1\%$), number of scale items ($N = 4; <1\%$), and scale range ($N = 4; <1\%$). When checking the original sources, we identified that two studies had provided different information between their text and tables (subsequently marked “data unavailable” and excluded). In 29 cases, only one coder found information on correlations ($N = 8; <1\%$), scale reliabilities ($N = 19; 2\%$), or sample size ($N = 2; <1\%$); these were confirmed by checking the original sources. Next, we checked for errors by examining for unexpectedly high, low, or missing values in our dataframe. Fifteen values were checked against their original sources, nine of which were entry errors and one was a missed value. Finally, we manually examined our dataframe for duplicated samples across different studies (e.g., a thesis subsequently published in a journal, reanalysis of samples in different publications). In 55 identified cases of duplication, we included only the earliest publication (see [Figure 1](#)).

Sample Characteristics

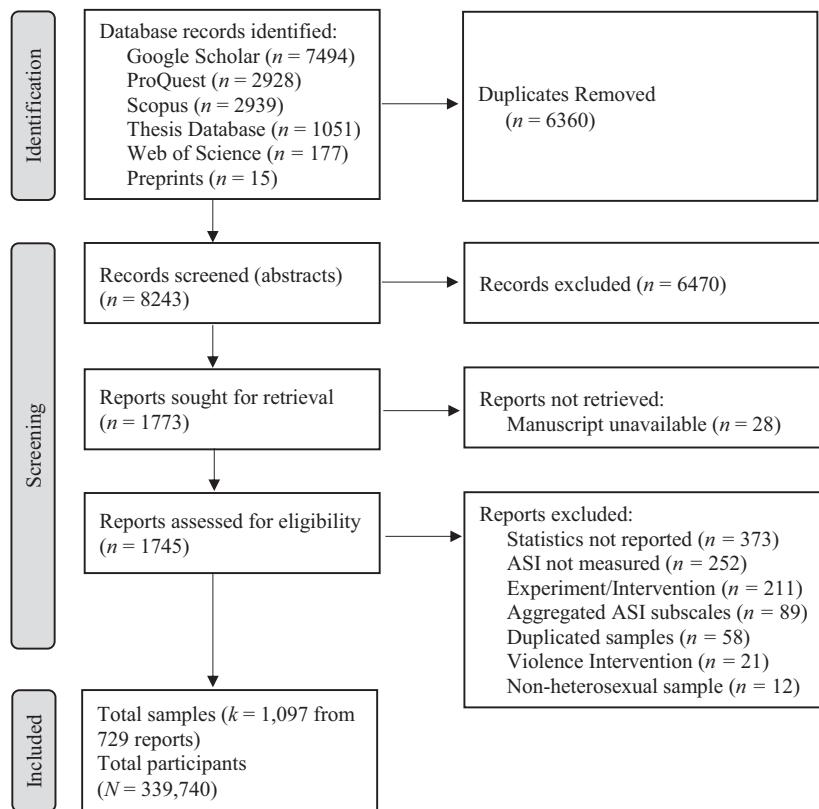
The final dataframe comprised 191,265 women and 148,476 men gathered in 1,097 samples from 81 countries. However, some studies exclusively examined women or men or, similarly, exclusively hostile sexism or benevolent sexism, and so we supply the N s for

samples and countries in each analysis. Nonetheless, our primary analyses represented a large proportion of the total dataframe (e.g., 133,879 women and 103,425 men for estimation of hostile sexism over years). In the [Supplemental Materials](#), we considered potential differences in endorsement of sexism depending on characteristics of the sample (i.e., university, online, or community sample) or measure (i.e., full vs. short-form versions of the ASI), and report similar patterns of results to those reported below.

Convergent Validity

We conducted a test to establish convergent evidence that our meta-analytic estimates aligned with an external measure of gender attitudes. Given the lack of any representative cross-cultural and longitudinal data on ambivalent sexism, we selected [Brandt’s \(2011\)](#) proxy of hostile sexism from the WVS, which averaged the items “On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do” and “On the whole, men make better business executives than women do.” These items take a focus on suitability for high-status gender roles and thus do not directly index hostile sexism, which represents women as underhandedly attempting to emasculate and disempower men (see [Glick & Fiske, 1996](#)). Accordingly, although we did not expect strong associations with our estimate of hostile sexism, positive associations should emerge between the WVS proxy and our measure of hostile sexism as indicators of negative evaluations toward women. We accounted for missingness in the WVS with Multiple Imputation by Chained Equations, extracting 100 imputed data sets with 100 iterations, with the *mice* package (Version 3.16.0; [Van Buuren & Groothuis-Oudshoorn, 2011](#)) in R (Version 4.3.0). We then estimated the associations between the aggregate measures of hostile sexism with the WVS proxy for hostile sexism, matching the same country and year, for women and men. Significant small-to-moderate associations emerged between hostile sexism and the WVS proxy scores for women ($r = .18$,

Figure 1
Flow Diagram of Data Identification, Screening, and Inclusion for Our Meta-Analysis of Measures of ASI Since Its First Publication (1996–2023)



Note. ASI = Ambivalent Sexism Inventory.

unstandardized $B = .30$, 95% CI [0.28, 0.32], $t = 35.55$, $p < .001$) and for men ($r = .25$, unstandardized $B = .39$, 95% CI [0.38, 0.41], $t = 44.65$, $p < .001$). Thus, supporting convergent validity, our meta-analytic estimation of countries' hostile sexism covaried with a proxy for hostile sexism obtained from representative samples within those countries.

Results

Data Preparation, Correlations, and Modeling Strategy

All measures of sexism were scaled to anchors of 0 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) following Glick et al. (2000). Also following prior multinational research on ambivalent sexism (Brandt, 2011; Glick et al., 2000, 2004), we treated measures collected at a similar time as concurrent. We recorded "year" by year of publication, which is typically 2 years after data collection for both empirical articles (Björk & Solomon, 2013) and for United Nations' gender inequality indices (United Nations Development Programme, 2024). Nonetheless, we were cautious about this approximation in our meta-analysis and so we focused on estimating trajectories of sexism and inequality indices across the 27-year timespan of our data and we did not concentrate on any particular year.

Data were analyzed using R (Version 4.4.0) with the R package metafor 4.6-0 (Viechtbauer, 2010). Descriptive statistics and

correlations utilizing all samples in our dataframe are displayed in Table 2. The high average HDI indicated our samples were primarily from countries in the top quartile of the world for life expectancy, years of education, and per capita income (United Nations Development Programme, 2024). The average levels of endorsement of hostile sexism and benevolent sexism were near the scale midpoint and were extremely highly correlated, consistent with prior multinational research (see Glick et al., 2000). Following Glick et al. (2000), we conducted models separately for women and for men due to the fundamental differences in the meaning of sexism (i.e., women's sexism toward their ingroup and men's sexism toward an outgroup).

The correlations in Table 2 extend prior research on the cross-sectional associations between sexism and indices of gender inequality. First, consistent patterns emerged indicating that women and men endorsed both hostile sexism and benevolent sexism more strongly in countries with higher levels of gender inequality. Thus, the pattern of results from 81 countries affirmed the positive interrelations between greater endorsement of hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and greater (in)equality indices that were suggestive in prior research (see Glick et al., 2000, 2004). Finally, for women and men, the strength of the correlation between endorsement of hostile sexism and benevolent sexism was itself positively associated with indices of gender equality, supplying novel evidence for Glick et al.'s (2000)

Table 2*Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Ambivalent Sexism and Gender Inequality From 1,097 Samples in 81 Countries*

| Measure | <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
|---|------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---|
| Aggregated statistics for men | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1. Men's hostile sexism | 2.42 (0.59) | — | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Men's benevolent sexism | 2.53 (0.56) | .766* | — | | | | | | | |
| 3. Men's correlation between hostile sexism and benevolent sexism | 0.32 (0.18) | -.218* | -.241* | — | | | | | | |
| Aggregated statistics for women | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4. Women's hostile sexism | 1.95 (0.62) | .766* | .715* | -.115 | — | | | | | |
| 5. Women's benevolent sexism | 2.34 (0.68) | .851* | .899* | -.206* | .758* | — | | | | |
| 6. Women's correlation between hostile sexism and benevolent sexism | 0.44 (0.15) | -.090 | -.193* | .505* | -.308* | -.103 | — | | | |
| Aggregated United Nations indices | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7. Gender Development Index | 0.98 (0.03) | -.231* | -.175* | .164* | -.171* | -.210* | .198* | — | | |
| 8. Gender Inequality Index | 0.19 (0.11) | .333* | .344* | -.209* | .329* | .353* | -.286* | -.470* | — | |
| 9. Human Development Index | 0.88 (0.08) | -.281* | -.294* | .133* | -.227* | -.358* | .247* | .646* | -.731* | — |

Note. Hostile sexism and benevolent sexism were scaled from 0 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. United Nations' indices were matched to the country and year for each sample. Higher scores on the Gender Inequality Index indicate lower equality. Higher scores on the Gender Development Index indicate higher equality. Higher scores on the Human Development Index indicate higher levels of national life expectancy, education, and income.

* $p < .05$.

argument that people in countries with relatively greater gender equality experience heightened dissonance when endorsing sexism and thus tend to more strongly endorse or reject *both* ideologies relative to more unequal countries.

Our primary analyses required us to conduct multilevel meta-analytic models. Specifically, the *meta-analytic* component of the model meant that samples with more reliable effects (i.e., greater sample sizes) contributed relatively more to the final estimates. The *multilevel* component of the model adjusted for the measurement interdependence within countries and years. Specifically, measures gathered within the same country were likely more similar to one another relative to measures from other countries, and simultaneously, measures gathered in the same year were likely more similar to one another relative to measures from other years. We used the *rma.mv* function from the *metafor* package with restricted maximum likelihood estimation, including cross-classified random effects for country and year, which simultaneously modeled the potential country-level variance and potential year-level variance. All predictors were standardized except for sample year, which was centered on the midpoint (i.e., the year 2010 = 0).

Differences Over Time in the Endorsement of Hostile Sexism and Benevolent Sexism

Primary Analysis 1 tested the extent to which endorsement of sexism differed between 1996 and 2023. We conducted a series of cross-classified meta-analytic multilevel models regressing women's or men's endorsement of each sexist ideology on year. An example for the model estimating women's hostile sexism is displayed in Equation 1:

$$\text{Women's Hostile Sexism}_{ict} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{year})_t + u_c \\ + w_t + \varepsilon_{ict}. \quad (1)$$

In Equation 1, women's endorsement of hostile sexism for a particular sample (*i*) gathered in a specific country (*c*) and specific year (*t*) is a function of the following: the total intercept of women's

endorsement of hostile sexism across countries and years (β_0); the fixed effect of year (β_{1t}), which represents the average difference in hostile sexism for each year; the random effect for country (u_c), which indexes the difference between women's average endorsement of hostile sexism in that country relative to the total intercept; the random effect for year (w_t), which indexes the difference in women's average endorsement of hostile sexism in that year relative to the total intercept; and the error term (ε_{ict}) that accounts for specific deviations in women's hostile sexism for that particular sample in a given country and year.

Results are reported in Table 3 and visualized in Figure 2 (hostile sexism) and Figure 3 (benevolent sexism). Significant small and negative associations emerged for women's endorsement of both hostile sexism and benevolent sexism as well as for men's endorsement of hostile sexism and benevolent sexism. The trajectories indicated that endorsement of hostile sexism and benevolent sexism decreased across time. Although effects in a single year were small, the compounded difference between samples' endorsement of hostile sexism and benevolent sexism over multiple years was meaningful. To illustrate, compounded over 20 years, the difference was half of a scale point on the ASI, a similar magnitude to the typical difference between women and men in their endorsement of hostile sexism. Finally, different countries exhibited variance in the estimated degree of difference in endorsement of hostile sexism and benevolent sexism across time. Models that estimated random intercepts and slopes for country differences in sexism over time are presented in the Supplemental Table S2, Figure S1, and Figure S2. Although differences over years were relatively heightened in some countries (e.g., Spain, Argentina) versus flatter in others (e.g., the United States, South Korea), 79 of 81 estimated slopes were negative. Thus, the pattern of country-level effects indicated a rejection of sexist ideologies across years, consistent with the fixed effects displayed in Figures 2 and 3.

Differences Over Time in the Hostile Sexism/Benevolent Sexism Association

Primary Analysis 2 examined the "ambivalence" of ambivalent sexism by testing for differences in the association between people's

Table 3
Multilevel Meta-Analysis Estimating the Average Difference in Ambivalent Sexism Over Time From Research Published Between 1996 and 2023

| Predictor | Women's endorsement of hostile sexism | | | Women's endorsement of benevolent sexism | | | Men's endorsement of hostile sexism | | | Men's endorsement of benevolent sexism | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------|-------|--|------------------|-------|-------------------------------------|------------------|-------|--|------------------|-------|
| | B | 95% CI | p | B | 95% CI | p | B | 95% CI | p | B | 95% CI | p |
| Intercept | 2.245 | [2.075, 2.415] | <.001 | 2.543 | [2.382, 2.705] | <.001 | 2.652 | [2.492, 2.812] | <.001 | 2.719 | [2.567, 2.871] | <.001 |
| Year | -0.028* | [-0.045, -0.011] | .002 | -0.019* | [-0.033, -0.005] | .008 | -0.030* | [-0.045, -0.016] | <.001 | -0.023* | [-0.035, -0.012] | <.001 |
| Random effects | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| σ^2_{Year} | .045 | | | .011 | | | .017 | | | — | | |
| $\sigma^2_{\text{Country}}$ | .071 | | | .079 | | | .068 | | | .076 | | |
| N _{Countries} | 71 | | | 71 | | | 71 | | | 71 | | |
| N _{Samples} | 566 | | | 555 | | | 555 | | | 524 | | |

Note. Year was centered on the sample midpoint (i.e., 2010 = 0); a negative slope for "year" indicates that sexism scores decreased over time. The random effect for "year" did not converge in the model predicting men's benevolent sexism, so year was estimated as a fixed effect. 95% CI = low and high values for a 95% confidence interval; σ^2 = estimated variance in the outcome attributable to the random effects of year or country.

* $p < .05$.

endorsement of hostile sexism and their endorsement of benevolent sexism across countries and years. We used the *escalc* function in R (Version 4.4.0, R Core Team, 2023) to calculate reliability-adjusted Z-correlations between hostile sexism and benevolent sexism (i.e., the reported correlation adjusted by Cronbach's α and sample size). We then conducted multilevel meta-analyses equivalent to *Primary Analysis 1* in which this outcome was regressed on year for women and for men.

The meta-analytic model indicated that hostile sexism and benevolent sexism were robustly associated for both women (unstandardized $B = .558$, 95% CI [0.500, 0.616], $p < .001$) and men (unstandardized $B = .414$, 95% CI [0.348, 0.481], $p < .001$), and these respective confidence intervals did not overlap. We transformed values from Z-correlations back to summary correlations for interpretability (see Borenstein et al., 2009), visualized in Figure 4. The average correlation between hostile sexism and benevolent sexism was very large for women ($r = .51$) and was large for men ($r = .39$) relative to the typical effect sizes in psychological science (Funder & Ozer, 2019; Lovakov & Agadullina, 2021). No evidence emerged to suggest the association between hostile sexism and benevolent sexism differed over years for men (unstandardized $B = .005$, 95% CI [−0.001, 0.010], $p = .104$). However, for women, the association between hostile sexism and benevolent sexism was significantly stronger across years (unstandardized $B = .007$, 95% CI [0.003, 0.012], $p = .002$). For women in later years, the association indicated relatively greater ambivalence between hostile sexism and benevolent sexism, and although the small effect size indicated that the year-to-year difference was negligible, across decades the increase was notable (see Figure 4). In sum, we affirmed a long-standing assumption in ambivalent sexism theory that sexism is robustly ambivalent (i.e., hostile sexism and benevolent sexism are significantly positively associated) across the world and, furthermore, affirmed that this correlation is particularly strong for women relative to men.

Indicators of Inequality Predicting Hostile Sexism and Benevolent Sexism

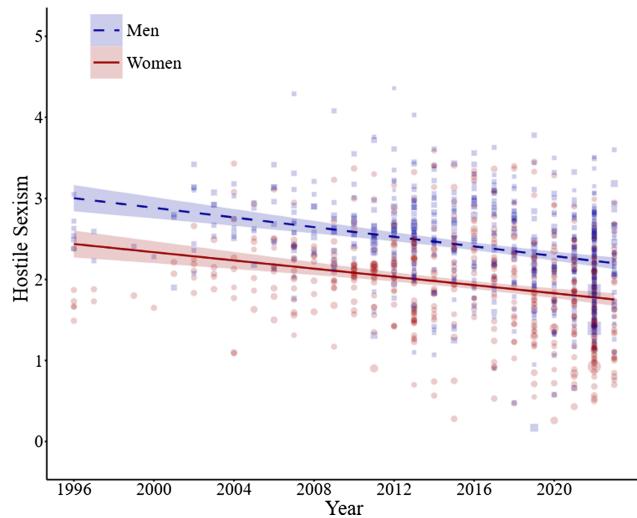
In *Primary Analysis 3a*, we conducted multilevel meta-analytic models that regressed women's and men's endorsement of hostile sexism and benevolent sexism on the levels and the trajectories of countries' gender inequality over time, indexed by either the GII or GDI (United Nations Development Programme, 2024). The example for women's hostile sexism and the GII is displayed in Equation 2:

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Women's Hostile Sexism}_{ict} = & \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Year})_t + \beta_2(\text{GII})_{ct} \\
 & + \beta_3(\text{HDI})_{ct} + \beta_4(\text{GII}_{ct} \times \text{Year}_t) \\
 & + \beta_5(\text{HDI}_{ct} \times \text{Year}_t) + u_c \\
 & + w_t + \varepsilon_{ict}.
 \end{aligned} \quad (2)$$

In Equation 2, the outcome is women's endorsement of hostile sexism for a particular sample (i) gathered in a country (c) and year (t). The model comprised the total intercept (β_0), the fixed effect of year (β_1), the fixed effect of the GII that varied for countries and years (β_2), the fixed effect of the HDI for countries and years (β_3), and the fixed effect of the GII for countries and years (β_4). We included countries' human development scores as covariate in all models that estimated the societal indicators of gender

Figure 2

Meta-Analytic Estimates for the Slopes of Women's and Men's Endorsement of Hostile Sexism, 1996–2023

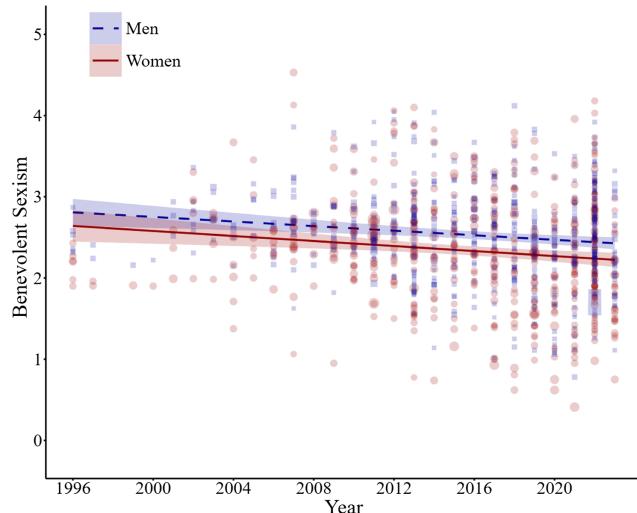


Note. Hostile sexism was scaled from 0 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). A negative slope for “year” indicates that sexism scores decreased over time. The relative sizes of points represent their respective weights estimated by the meta-analytic model. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

inequality, following Glick et al. (2000), to statistically adjust for potential differences in sexism due to the general socioeconomic and educational opportunities in a given country relative to other countries. The model included interaction terms between the GII

Figure 3

Meta-Analytic Estimates for the Slopes of Women's and Men's Endorsement of Benevolent Sexism, 1996–2023



Note. Benevolent sexism was scaled from 0 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). A negative slope for “year” indicates that sexism scores decreased over time. The relative sizes of points represent their respective weights estimated by the meta-analytic model. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

and year (β_5) and between the HDI and year (β_6), which tested for any differences in women's endorsement of hostile sexism that corresponded to differences in countries' gender inequality or human development over years. Finally, the model included random effects for country (u_c) and year (w_t), and the error term (ϵ_{ict}) allowed for deviations in the estimates for any particular sample. Results from the models are displayed in Table 4 for women and in Table 5 for men.

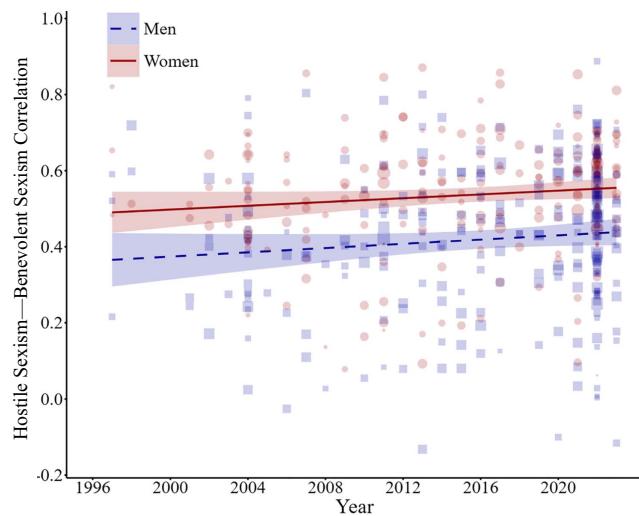
We first address the effects for indicators of gender (in)equality for women. First, no associations emerged in the model predicting women's endorsement of hostile sexism. Although one significant interaction effect emerged in the model in which countries' GII predicted women's benevolent sexism (see right side of Table 4), the small size of the interaction effect, and uncertainty of estimates in earlier years, meant that there was no meaningful difference between the predicted slopes. We illustrate by selecting points on those slopes 6 years above and below our year midpoint of 2010: The confidence intervals for these slopes overlapped in 2004 (lower GII $B = 2.74$, 95% CI [2.35, 3.13]; higher GII $B = 2.33$, 95% CI [1.98, 2.67]) and overlapped in 2016 (lower GII $B = 2.41$, 95% CI [2.18, 2.63]; higher GII $B = 2.25$, 95% CI [1.95, 2.55]). In sum, any potential differences appeared to be due to the unexpected pattern in which women's endorsement of benevolent sexism was estimated to be higher in countries with relatively *lower* gender inequality in the earlier years of the dataframe (see Supplemental Figure S3), but error was so large that these estimated differences were not reliable. Thus, no evidence for a “protection racket effect” emerged in these particular tests.

We next summarize the effects for men (Table 5). First, no associations emerged between countries' GDI and (a) men's endorsement of hostile sexism or (b) men's endorsement of benevolent sexism. Second, in the models predicting GII, small interaction effects between GII and year emerged in the models predicting men's endorsement of hostile sexism and benevolent sexism. However, the patterns were again indicative of very small differences between slopes and there was substantial overlap between points on the slopes. For men's endorsement of hostile sexism, points on the simple slopes overlapped in 2004 (lower GII $B = 2.28$, 95% CI [2.50, 3.23]; higher GII $B = 2.74$, 95% CI [2.40, 3.07]) and overlapped in 2016 (lower GII $B = 2.39$, 95% CI [2.18, 2.60]; higher GII $B = 2.40$, 95% CI [2.11, 2.69]). Equally, for men's endorsement of benevolent sexism, points on the simple slopes overlapped in 2004 (lower GII $B = 2.91$, 95% CI [2.55, 3.26]; higher GII $B = 2.61$, 95% CI [2.29, 2.93]) and overlapped in 2016 (lower GII $B = 2.60$, 95% CI [2.40, 2.81]; higher GII $B = 2.40$, 95% CI [2.11, 2.69]). Mirroring the pattern described above, men's endorsement of hostile sexism and benevolent sexism was slightly higher in countries with relatively lower gender inequality in the earlier years of the dataframe, but the slopes that differed by GII tended to converge toward the same point in later years (see Supplemental Figure S3).

Finally, two small interaction effects emerged for HDI for women's endorsement of hostile sexism (Table 4) and men's endorsement of benevolent sexism (Table 5). However, the interactions did not consistently emerge across models and their small effect sizes meant there was substantial overlap between points on each of the slopes (plotted in the Supplemental Figures S4 and S5). In sum, there was no consistent evidence that indicators of different societal conditions explained the variance across countries or across time in people's endorsement of sexist ideologies.

Figure 4

Plots of the Strength of the Association Between Hostile Sexism and Benevolent Sexism for Women and Men



Note. Visualized points were reliability-adjusted Z-correlations that were transformed to summary correlations for interpretability. Possible scores on the outcome ranged from -1 to 1 . The relative sizes of points represent their respective weights estimated by the meta-analytic model. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

Additional Test of the Protection Racket

The prior analyses did not find any evidence for an interpretation of the “protection racket” effect in which women’s endorsement of benevolent sexism should be generally higher in countries with greater gender inequalities. However, we also conducted a test of the protection racket hypothesis following Glick et al. (2000), focusing on the extent to which women endorse benevolent sexism *relative* to men’s endorsement of benevolent sexism, in the context of threats toward women in society (e.g., men’s average hostile sexism in a country, societal indicators of gender inequality). Accordingly, we calculated the standardized mean difference of men’s benevolent sexism minus women’s benevolent sexism. We then conducted three multilevel meta-analytic models, which regressed the men–women benevolent sexism difference on the following: men’s endorsement of hostile sexism (*Model 1*; $k = 416$), countries’ GII while covarying for their HDI (*Model 2*; $k = 398$), or countries’ GDI while covarying for their HDI (*Model 3*; $k = 398$).

In *Model 1*, a significant and small negative association emerged between hostile sexism and the gender difference in benevolent sexism ($\beta = -.038$, 95% CI $[-0.060, -0.016]$, $z = 3.43$, $p < .001$). This result indicated that women’s and men’s endorsement of benevolent sexism was more closely aligned in countries with greater hostile sexism toward women, consistent with Glick et al.’s (2000) description of the *protection racket effect*. In addition, a descriptive pattern emerged that was also reported in Glick et al., 2000 and Zawisza et al. (2025) when pooling data across time: In some countries where men endorsed hostile sexism the most, women’s endorsement of benevolent sexism appeared stronger than men’s endorsement of benevolent sexism (see *Supplemental Figure S6*).

Model 2 and *Model 3* considered gender inequality indices as markers of societal threat toward women. In *Model 2*, there was no evidence that men–women difference in benevolent sexism was associated with countries’ GII ($\beta = -.018$, 95% CI $[-0.080, 0.044]$, $z = -0.58$, $p = .576$); however, a significant positive association emerged with countries’ HDI ($\beta = .074$, 95% CI $[0.015, 0.132]$, $z = 2.46$, $p = .014$). *Model 3* was identical: Countries’ GDI was not a significant predictor ($\beta = -.021$, 95% CI $[-0.051, 0.010]$, $z = -1.33$, $p = .182$), but a positive association emerged with countries’ HDI ($\beta = .103$, 95% CI $[0.068, 0.139]$, $z = 5.68$, $p < .001$). Thus, in both *Models 2* and *3*, women’s and men’s benevolent sexism was relatively more aligned in countries with general (i.e., nongendered) indicators of relatively lower development (e.g., lower human longevity, education, and per capita income). In sum, evidence consistent with a protection racket effect emerged when measures of men’s hostile sexism were high but not when indicators of gender inequality were high.

Endorsement of Hostile Sexism and Benevolent Sexism Predicting Gender (In)Equality

Our fourth set of analyses considered the theoretical principle that people’s endorsement of sexist attitudes functions to maintain societal gender inequality (*Primary Analysis 3b*). We selected the United Nations’ (a) GII and (b) GDI as outcomes, which are a single value assigned to each country in each United Nations’ report (United Nations Development Programme, 2024). Because single-value outcomes contributed no within-country variance components at the year level, the following analyses were multilevel models that nested year (*Level 1*) within country (*Level 2*) using the *lme4* package (Bates et al., 2015). Each index of gender (in)equality was regressed on endorsement of hostile sexism, endorsement of benevolent sexism, and their respective interactions with year (i.e., testing the extent to which associations differed across time).

Results from the model are presented in *Table 6*. We first summarize the general and then address the effects for hostile sexism. The association between year and the GII was negative, indicating a general decrease in societal indicators of disadvantages experienced by women (e.g., maternal mortality, lack of political representation). Equally, the association between year and the GDI was positive, indicating that the general indicators of human development (e.g., life expectancy, education, and economic well-being) were converging between women and men over time. For both women and men, greater endorsement of hostile sexism was, on average, associated with greater gender inequality (i.e., GII). Men’s endorsement of hostile sexism was also, on average, associated with relatively lower gender equality (i.e., GDI). Thus, consistent with a key principle of ambivalent sexism theory, greater endorsement of hostile sexism in a country was linked with more harm and disadvantage experienced by women in that country. However, these three associations were qualified by significant interactions between hostile sexism and year, which showed the same unexpected pattern, plotted in *Figure 5* (GII) and *Figure 6* (GDI).

The simple slopes all indicated a general pattern in which gender inequalities decreased across time, but small differences between the slopes indicated that the decreases were heightened in contexts where people endorsed hostile sexism more strongly. As plotted in *Figure 5*, the negative slope of GII over years was heightened for countries with relatively higher (1 SD above the mean) endorsement

Table 4
Multilevel Meta-Analysis Regressing Women's Hostile Sexism or Benevolent Sexism on United Nations' Measures of Countries' Gender (In)Equality

| Predictor | Women's endorsement of hostile sexism | | | | | | Women's endorsement of benevolent sexism | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------|-------|----------------------|------------------|-------|--|-----------------|-------|----------------------|----------------|-------|
| | Predicted by the GDI | | | Predicted by the GII | | | Predicted by the GDI | | | Predicted by the GII | | |
| | B | 95% CI | p | B | 95% CI | p | B | 95% CI | p | B | 95% CI | p |
| Intercept | 2.114 | [1.938, 2.290] | <.001 | 2.087 | [1.899, 2.274] | <.001 | 2.372 | [2.210, 2.534] | <.001 | 2.432 | [2.257, 2.606] | <.001 |
| Year | -.0021* | [-.0040, -.0002] | .030 | -.016 | [-.036, .005] | .140 | -.010 | [-.025, .006] | .218 | -.017* | [-.033, -.001] | .034 |
| GDI | 0.049 | [-0.078, 0.176] | .762 | — | — | — | 0.044 | [-0.088, 0.176] | .970 | — | — | — |
| GDI × Year | -.012 | [-.026, .002] | .115 | — | — | — | -.008 | [-.023, 0.008] | .473 | — | — | — |
| GII | — | — | — | 0.133 | [-.076, .341] | .211 | — | — | — | -.142 | [-.364, .080] | .211 |
| GII × Year | — | — | — | -.014 | [-.032, .005] | .142 | — | — | — | 0.025* | [.013, .044] | .012 |
| HDI | -.0119 | [-.0268, .0229] | .115 | 0.026 | [-.0198, .250] | .819 | -.027* | [-.0373, -.080] | .003 | -.307* | [-.543, -.072] | .011 |
| HDI × Year | -.0007 | [-.0223, .0009] | .363 | -.026* | [-.0444, -.0007] | <.001 | -.003 | [-.019, .013] | .686 | 0.011 | [-.009, .031] | .293 |
| Random effects | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| σ^2_{Year} | 0.05 | | | 0.05 | | | 0.01 | | | 0.01 | | |
| $\sigma^2_{\text{Country}}$ | 0.05 | | | 0.04 | | | 0.04 | | | 0.05 | | |
| N _{Countries} | 69 | | | 69 | | | 69 | | | 69 | | |
| N _{Samples} | 533 | | | 533 | | | 526 | | | 526 | | |

Note. Year was centered on the sample midpoint (i.e., 2010 = 0); a negative slope for "year" indicates that sexism scores decreased over time. GII = Gender Inequality Index (higher scores indicate lower equality); GDI = Gender Development Index (higher scores indicate higher equality); HDI = Human Development Index (higher scores indicate higher levels of longevity, schooling years, and income); CI = confidence interval; σ^2 = estimated variance in the outcome attributable to the random effects of year or country.

* $p < .05$.

of hostile sexism ($\text{slope}_{\text{Women}} = -.014$ [−.015, −.012], $p < .001$; $\text{slope}_{\text{Men}} = -.013$ [−.015, −.012], $p < .001$) compared to countries with relative rejection (1 SD below the mean) of hostile sexism ($\text{slope}_{\text{Women}} = -.008$ [−.010, −.007], $p < .001$; $\text{slope}_{\text{Men}} = -.007$ [−.008, −.005], $p < .001$). Finally, as plotted in Figure 6, the positive slope of GDI over years was heightened for countries in which men more strongly (1 SD above the mean) endorsed hostile sexism ($\text{slope} = .0048$ [.0043, .0053], $p < .001$) versus rejected hostile sexism (1 SD below the mean; $\text{slope} = .0026$ [.0020, .0033], $p < .001$). Altogether, this unexpected pattern indicated that countries that had a generally higher level of hostile sexism were making more rapid progress toward equality while countries with more egalitarian attitudes had stalled in their progress (e.g., England et al., 2020). Nonetheless, the slope differences were small relative to the total level of change over time.

Finally, countries' GII was predicted by an interaction between men's endorsement of benevolent sexism and year (Table 6). Against our expectations, greater men's endorsement of benevolent sexism simultaneously predicted generally *lower* levels of gender inequality in earlier years of the dataframe, qualified by a significant interaction effect indicating that this difference attenuated over years. Thus, the negative slope of GII over years was heightened for countries in which men endorsed benevolent sexism more strongly (+1 SD; $\text{slope}_{\text{Men}} = -.015$ [−.017, −.013], $p < .001$) versus more weakly (−1 SD; $\text{slope}_{\text{Women}} = -.010$ [−.012, −.008], $p < .001$; $\text{slope}_{\text{Men}} = -.010$ [−.012, −.009], $p < .001$; plotted in Supplemental Figure S6). Altogether, given the positive bivariate associations between men's benevolent sexism and gender inequality (Table 2), this latter pattern likely represented a suppression effect: In earlier years of the dataframe, men's endorsement of benevolent sexism was predictive of relatively better outcomes for women on the GII, but specifically in the context of statistically adjusting for the association between hostile sexism and greater inequality.

General Discussion

Multinational organizations made urgent calls for research into sexism and gender inequalities (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2022; United Nations Development Programme, 2022). Ambivalent sexism theory is well-positioned to address these research needs: Robust evidence demonstrates that people's endorsement of hostile sexism and benevolent sexism is harmful for women while simultaneously encouraging people to adopt conventional traditional roles in which men hold advantages (e.g., Bareket & Fiske, 2023; Barreto & Doyle, 2023; Connor et al., 2017). However, systematic reviews identified a major lack of longitudinal cross-cultural data on hostile sexism and benevolent sexism. Such data are necessary to understand the fundamental theoretical principles on the variance in ambivalent sexism across countries and over time. Our multilevel meta-analysis of research on ambivalent sexism—totaling 1,097 samples from 81 countries—provides initial insights into several principles of ambivalent sexism theory (summarized in Table 7). In the following sections, we address the theoretical implications of the observed patterns for the differences in ambivalent sexism over time, the robust “ambivalence” of sexist ideologies, and new questions for investigating the theorized links between ambivalent sexism and societal gender inequalities.

Table 5
Multilevel Meta-Analysis Regressing Men's Hostile Sexism or Benevolent Sexism on United Nations' Measures of Countries' Gender (In)Equality

| Predictor | Men's endorsement of hostile sexism | | | | | | Men's endorsement of benevolent sexism | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------|-------|----------------------|------------------|-------|--|------------------|-------|----------------------|------------------|-------|
| | Predicted by the GDI | | | Predicted by the GII | | | Predicted by the GDI | | | Predicted by the GII | | |
| | B | 95% CI | p | B | 95% CI | p | B | 95% CI | p | B | 95% CI | p |
| Intercept | 2.537 | [2.377, 2.700] | <.001 | 2.600 | [2.438, 2.760] | <.001 | 2.575 | [2.425, 2.725] | <.001 | 2.617 | [2.461, 2.774] | <.001 |
| Year | -0.029* | [-0.045, -0.013] | <.001 | -0.034* | [-0.049, -0.018] | <.001 | -0.021* | [-0.033, -0.008] | .002 | -0.024* | [-0.037, -0.011] | <.001 |
| GDI | 0.015 | [-0.110, 0.140] | .813 | — | — | — | -0.014 | [-0.142, 0.114] | .830 | — | — | — |
| GDI × Year | 0.000 | [-0.014, 0.015] | .968 | — | — | — | 0.004 | [-0.011, 0.019] | .605 | — | — | — |
| GII | — | — | — | -0.029 | [-0.239, 0.181] | .788 | — | — | — | -0.138 | [-0.345, 0.069] | .192 |
| GII × Year | — | — | — | 0.023* | [0.004, 0.043] | .017 | — | — | — | 0.022* | [0.004, 0.040] | .017 |
| HDI | -0.107 | [-0.248, 0.035] | .140 | -0.107 | [-0.327, 0.114] | .343 | -0.091 | [-0.230, 0.049] | .202 | -0.208 | [-0.421, 0.005] | .056 |
| HDI × Year | -0.013 | [-0.029, 0.003] | .108 | -0.006 | [-0.015, -0.026] | .590 | -0.018* | [-0.034, -0.003] | .023 | 0.002 | [-0.018, 0.021] | .866 |
| Random effects | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| σ^2_{Year} | 0.02 | | | 0.01 | | | <.001 | | | — | | |
| $\sigma^2_{\text{Country}}$ | 0.04 | | | 0.04 | | | 0.04 | | | 0.04 | | |
| N _{Countries} | 68 | | | 68 | | | 68 | | | 68 | | |
| N _{Samples} | 522 | | | 522 | | | 494 | | | 494 | | |

Note. Year was centered on the sample midpoint (i.e., 2010 = 0); a negative slope for "year" indicates that sexism scores decreased over time. The model regressing men's endorsement of benevolent sexism on GII did not converge, so year was modeled as a fixed effect. GII = Gender Inequality Index (higher scores indicate higher equality); HDI = Human Development Index (higher scores indicate higher levels of longevity, schooling years, and income); CI = confidence interval; σ^2 = estimated variance in the outcome attributable to the random effects of year or country.

* $p < .05$.

Table 6
Multilevel Models Regressing Indices of Countries' Gender (In)Equality on Endorsement of HS and BS

| Predictor | Gender Inequality Index | | | | | | Gender Development Index | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|-------|--------|------------------|-------|--------------------------|------------------|-------|--------|------------------|-------|
| | Women | | | Men | | | Women | | | Men | | |
| | B | 95% CI | p | B | 95% CI | p | B | 95% CI | p | B | 95% CI | p |
| Intercept | .506 | [−0.026, 1.037] | .062 | .495 | [−0.038, 1.028] | .069 | −.669 | [−1.115, −0.222] | .003 | −.647 | [−1.092, −0.201] | .005 |
| Year | −.048* | [−0.051, −0.045] | <.001 | −.047* | [−0.050, −0.044] | <.001 | .033* | [0.028, 0.038] | <.001 | .032* | [0.026, 0.037] | <.001 |
| HS | .037 | [−0.002, 0.077] | .062 | .056* | [0.018, 0.093] | .004 | −.075* | [−0.147, −0.004] | .038 | −.015* | [−0.150, −0.012] | .022 |
| HS × Year | −.005* | [−0.010, −0.000] | .043 | −.009* | [−0.013, −0.004] | <.001 | .006 | [−0.003, 0.015] | .200 | .015* | [−0.007, 0.023] | <.001 |
| BS | .011 | [−0.024, 0.045] | .551 | −.034 | [−0.072, 0.004] | .078 | −.006 | [−0.069, 0.057] | .855 | .045 | [−0.025, 0.115] | .205 |
| BS × Year | −.002 | [−0.007, 0.003] | .450 | .005* | [0.000, 0.010] | .036 | .004 | [−0.005, 0.012] | .369 | −.008 | [−0.017, 0.001] | .067 |
| Random effects | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| σ^2_{Year} | 0.03 | | | 0.02 | | | 0.08 | | | 0.08 | | |
| $\sigma^2_{\text{Country}}$ | 2.33 | | | 2.34 | | | 1.62 | | | 1.61 | | |
| $N_{\text{Countries}}$ | 32 | | | 32 | | | 32 | | | 32 | | |
| N_{Samples} | 461 | | | 445 | | | 461 | | | 445 | | |

Note. The Gender Inequality Index (higher scores indicate lower equality) and the Gender Development Index (higher scores indicate higher equality) were standardized to make the scale of effects interpretable; the patterns of results were the same in models with unstandardized outcomes. Year was centered on the sample midpoint (i.e., 2010 = 0). HS = hostile sexism; BS = benevolent sexism; CI = confidence interval; σ^2 = estimated variance in the outcome attributable to the random effects of year or country.

* $p < .05$.

The Differences in Ambivalent Sexism Over Years

People's average endorsement of hostile sexism and endorsement of benevolent sexism was close to the scale midpoints, and both typically followed trajectories of decline (*Primary Analysis 1*). Our results support the assumption that people's endorsement of hostile sexism and benevolent sexism has generally decreased across the world (e.g., [Bareket & Fiske, 2023](#); [Barreto & Doyle, 2023](#)), a claim based on other attitudinal and societal indicators of egalitarianism, such as global increases in support for gender equity in the workforce (e.g., [World Economic Forum, 2024](#)). We affirmed and extended that claim by estimating approximate effect sizes for the change in hostile sexism and benevolent sexism from year to year. The average difference was small, but when compounded over 25 years, the average rejection of sexist ideologies amounted to half of a scale point. This difference is a similar magnitude to the average differences between women's and men's scores on the ASI, considered to be a large and practically meaningful difference (e.g., [Glick et al., 2000](#)). We offer some cautious qualification to the estimated declines in sexism: The year-to-year declines were small, and even in the most recent year of our data, the average sample expressed *slight disagreement* with hostile sexism and benevolent sexism rather than outright rejection of sexist attitudes.

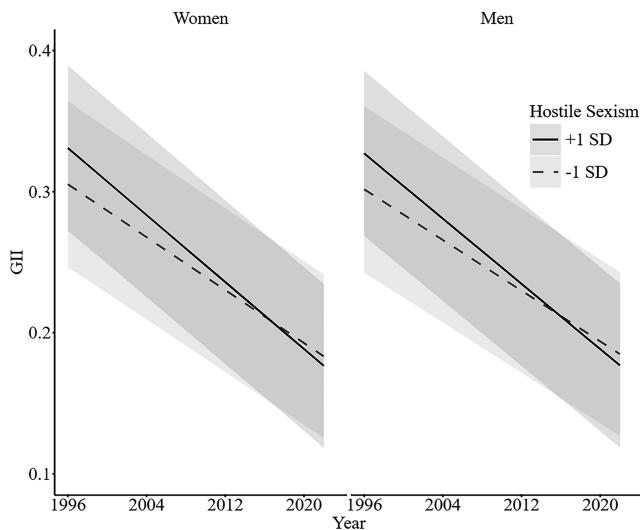
Although the year-to-year differences in people's endorsement of sexism generally followed a pattern of decline across countries, our results emphasize the need to incorporate cultural differences when investigating the development of sexist attitudes. For instance, country-level variability emerged in the declining trajectories of sexism. The estimated decline over years was relatively heightened for some countries (e.g., Spain and Chile) or closer to null for others (e.g., the United States and South Korea). Indeed, our findings aligned with multinational data examining gender differences across countries. For instance, convergent evidence from the WVS indicated that gender attitudes are becoming more egalitarian worldwide (i.e., disagreement with the item "men have more rights to jobs or education than women"), including a prominent change in Spain ([Inglehart et al., 2017](#); also see [Moya & Moya-Garofano, 2021](#)). Our results also converged with the [World Economic Forum \(2024\)](#) indicators of societal gender gaps, which identified more parity in Spain (ranked 10th in the world) and Chile (ranked 21st) relative to the United States (ranked 43rd) or South Korea (ranked 94th). Altogether, researchers need to consider cultural variance in the manifestation and differences in sexist attitudes. We urge researchers to resist the assumption that a country's average rejection of sexism is indicative of how those attitudes will differ over time. Perhaps countries with higher levels of sexism and gender inequalities have more impetus to adopt interventions and more room to move, whereas countries that have made historical advancements toward egalitarian gender norms have come to a standstill (see [England et al., 2020](#), for evidence from the United States).

Robust Evidence for the Ambivalence of Sexist Attitudes

Our meta-analysis provided new support for a long-standing and fundamental principle of ambivalent sexism theory: Groups of people who hold overtly derogatory attitudes toward women (hostile sexism) also hold more reverential and patronizing attitudes toward women (benevolent sexism). Hostile sexism and benevolent sexism were consistently positively associated (*Primary Analysis 2*),

Figure 5

Multilevel Models of Countries' Gender Inequality, 1996–2023, Moderated by Women's (Left Panel) or Men's (Right Panel) Hostile Sexism



Note. GII = Gender Inequality Index, a score given to each country in each year by the United Nations Human Development data center, ranging from 0 = *very low gender inequality* to 1 = *very high gender inequality*.

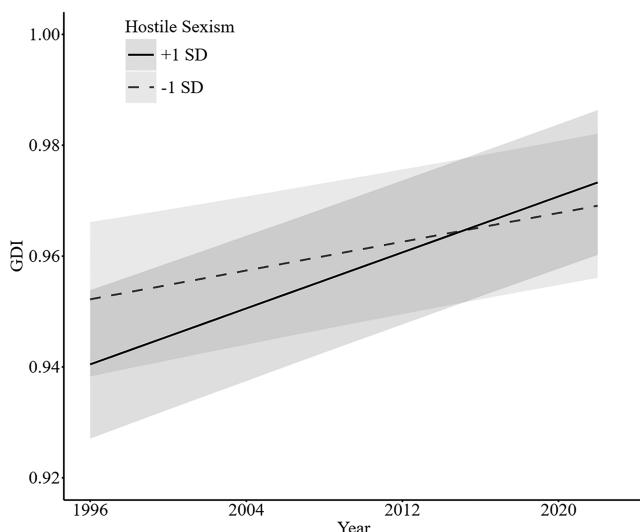
affirming that sexism is “ambivalent” rather than univalent. Further, we illustrated that the theorized ambivalence of sexism consistently emerged within and across samples. Specifically, within samples, people who endorsed hostile sexism more strongly also tended to

endorse benevolent sexism more strongly. Moreover, in our cross-sectional sample of 81 countries, we replicated the seminal finding that countries with higher endorsement of hostile sexism also exhibited relatively higher endorsement of benevolent sexism (Glick et al., 2000). Finally, consistent with the premise that ambivalence is fundamental to the structure of sexist attitudes, the sample-level associations between hostile sexism and benevolent sexism remained strong across all 27 years of our dataframe (Fiske et al., 2002; Glick & Fiske, 1996). Thus, we concluded that there is strong evidence that sexism is ambivalent (Table 7): The people and groups who hold the most derogatory attitudes toward women tend to be the same people and groups who characterize women as deserving men's reverence, protection, and provision.

Mapping the association between hostile sexism and benevolent sexism has implications for theory on the ambivalence of sexism (Becker, 2010; Glick & Fiske, 2001a; Glick et al., 1997). Specifically, when people who endorse hostile sexism experience more cognitive dissonance and practical difficulties—such as holding antagonistic beliefs about women while trying to maintain close relationships with women—they are theorized to employ benevolent sexism to resolve cognitive discomfort and reduce its interpersonal costs. Our meta-analysis was consistent with theorizing that heightened dissonance is a key feature of *ambivalent sexism*. Women (relative to other gender groups) should experience greater dissonance from endorsing sexism toward women because the attitudes could apply to the self and the ingroup (Becker, 2010), and indeed our evidence indicated a very large association between hostile sexism and benevolent sexism that exhibited small increases over time for women (and not for men). Second, people's hostile sexism should be more dissonant in egalitarian contexts. In our data, the ambivalence of sexism was stronger for people who lived in countries with greater indices of gender equality (e.g., relatively better conditions for women's health care, political empowerment, and economic opportunities). Evidence for the association between hostile sexism and benevolent sexism was robust across samples with relatively greater endorsement and relatively greater rejection of sexism on average. Nonetheless, we could not eliminate an alternative explanation that stronger correlations for women or egalitarian contexts are due to those tests capturing an outright rejection of both forms of sexism, thus inflating their correlation. In sum, we considered current evidence for this theoretical principle to be strong (Table 7) but urge more research into the patterns and mechanisms that mean people tend to endorse *both* hostile sexism and benevolent sexism together (e.g., Kay et al., 2009; Sibley & Becker, 2012).

Figure 6

A Multilevel Model of Countries' Gender Equality, 1996–2023, Moderated by Men's Hostile Sexism



Note. GDI = Gender Development Index, a score given to each country in each year by the United Nations Human Development data center, ranging from 0 = *very low gender equality* to 1 = *very high gender equality*.

Questions About the Sources of Sexism and the Assessment of Gender (In)Equality

In Primary Analysis 3a, we considered evidence for the theoretical claim that hostile sexism and benevolent sexism “reflect” gender inequality (e.g., Bareket & Fiske, 2023, p. 32). Specifically, several theories state that people's experiences of gender inequalities in their lives (e.g., voting for political candidates from an exclusive selection of men) should generally prompt people to adopt and maintain attitudes about men's deservingness of high status, such as hostile beliefs that women are manipulative or benevolent beliefs that men use their advantages to provide for others (e.g., Glick & Fiske, 1996; Jost & Banaji, 1994; Koenig & Eagly, 2014; Ridgeway, 2001). The meta-analytic bivariate correlations indicated

Table 7
Summary of Evidence From the Meta-Analytic Models Relative to Principles Derived From Ambivalent Sexism Theory and Theories on Gender Prejudice

| Theoretical principle | Description | Example reference | Our evaluation of the strength of current evidence |
|--|--|--|---|
| Sexism Is “Ambivalent” | Endorsement of hostile sexism and benevolent sexism emerges, and is significantly positively associated, across the world. | Glick et al. (2000) Glick and Fiske (2001a) | <i>Strong.</i> Hostile sexism and benevolent sexism emerged and were consistently significantly positively correlated. |
| The Ambivalence of Sexism Is Greater for Women | Hostile sexism and benevolent sexism are more strongly associated (i.e., more ambivalent) for women than for men. | Glick and Fiske (1996) Glick et al. (1997) | <i>New Finding.</i> Endorsement of hostile sexism and benevolent sexism exhibited small decreases over the years. |
| The Ambivalence of Sexism Is Greater in More Equal Contexts | Hostile sexism and benevolent sexism are more strongly associated in countries with lower gender inequalities. | Glick et al. (2000) Glick et al. (2004) | <i>Strong.</i> The hostile sexism-benevolent sexism correlation was very strong for women (and increased over years) and was strong for men. |
| Gender Inequalities Cultivate Sexism | Greater societal inequalities (e.g., men’s overrepresentation in economic, political, and legal roles) predict higher endorsement of sexism. | Glick et al. (2000) Jost et al. (2008) Koenig and Eagly (2014) | <i>Strong.</i> Stronger associations emerged in samples from countries with lower Gender Inequality Index scores or higher Gender Development Index scores. |
| Sexism Maintains Gender Inequalities | Greater endorsement of hostile sexism and benevolent sexism predicts relatively greater societal inequalities (i.e., mitigate the progress toward equality). | Brandt (2011) Glick et al. (2000) Jost et al. (2008) | <i>Suggestive.</i> Cross-sectional associations emerged between societal gender inequality and greater endorsement of sexism. No evidence emerged to support or refute this principle in the meta-analytic multilevel models. |
| Beneficent Sexism is a “Protection Racket” | Women’s experience of greater hostility or inequalities predicts their (a) alignment with men’s endorsement of benevolent sexism and/or (b) greater endorsement of benevolent sexism outright. | Fischer (2006) Glick and Fiske (2001b) Radke et al. (2018) | <i>Moderate.</i> Women’s endorsement of benevolent sexism aligned more with men’s endorsement of benevolent sexism in contexts of greater men’s hostile sexism. |
| | | | <i>New Finding.</i> Women’s endorsement of benevolent sexism was greater and aligned with men’s benevolent sexism in countries with relatively lower human development scores. No evidence emerged for gender (in)equality indices. |

Note. The italic text in the rightmost column summarizes our evaluation of the strength of current evidence in the meta-analysis for the principle in the leftmost column.

that hostile sexism and benevolent sexism were each associated with greater gender inequality when aggregating across countries and years—extending only four extant country-level studies on sexism toward women and gender inequality (i.e., Brandt, 2011; Glick et al., 2000, 2004; Zawisza et al., 2025). However, no evidence emerged for an association with either form of sexism in the meta-analytic multilevel models that estimated the averages and the changes in countries' gender inequality indices. Instead, small moderation effects indicated the reverse pattern: In earlier years of the data-frame, people's endorsement of sexist attitudes was slightly higher in countries with relatively *lower* scores on the GII, although these differences diminished in later years. Importantly, an absence of findings does not refute these theories or their robust supporting evidence. Instead, our meta-analytic review draws attention to the shared claim in several established theories, which currently lack any direct empirical evidence—countries' gender inequality *should* predict subsequent increases in populations' ambivalent sexism (Table 7).

What are the next steps for uncovering how people's experiences of living in gender (un)equal contexts influence their endorsement of ambivalent sexism? First, theory needs to specify the *degree* of change in gender inequality required to trigger a corresponding change in ambivalent sexism. Research that experimentally manipulates information about typical gender inequalities, such as articles on normative hostility toward women or gender gaps in CEO positions, is sufficient to increase people's subsequent agreement with benevolent sexism (Fischer, 2006; Kay et al., 2009). However, perhaps people's exposure to gender equality in their everyday lives is relatively more diffuse and subtle than in experiments and thus insufficient to trigger a corresponding change in ambivalent sexism. For instance, Koenig and Eagly (2014) stated that even in the most "egalitarian" countries, which have witnessed multigenerational improvements in women's empowerment, women are underpaid, underrepresented in higher status roles, and overrepresented in domestic roles relative to men (also see Bareket & Fiske, 2023; England et al., 2020). To the extent that gender inequalities are generally salient to women and men, the statistically significant year-to-year decrease in metrics of gender inequalities may not carry any practical weight. In sum, theory needs to specify the degree of difference in societal gender (in)equality that is necessary to produce a corresponding shift in people's endorsement of hostile sexism and benevolent sexism.

Second, theory needs to specify the timescale between a change in societal gender (in)equality and the corresponding change in people's endorsement of ambivalent sexism. Our meta-analysis tested the extent to which gender inequality indices in a given year were associated with samples' endorsement of sexism in that same year. Our decision was grounded in experimental research suggesting gender inequality and sexist attitudes have a close temporal connection (e.g., Kay et al., 2009) as well as related longitudinal research suggesting that community campaigns for sexual assault awareness (i.e., the #MeToo movement) were linked with proximate changes in attitudes toward sexual assault (Szekeres et al., 2020). However, there are reasons to suspect people's sexist attitudes may lag behind changes in the sociostructural indicators used by the United Nations. For instance, more balanced gender representation in political roles or CEO positions may only be salient in the subsequent years once those roles become more visible to the public or when people in those influential roles implement egalitarian

policies. Further muddying the links between gender (in)equalities and ambivalent sexism, some societal changes toward equality could be met with backlash and polarization, resulting in *increases* in some people's sexist attitudes over the following years (see Flood et al., 2021) followed by decreases in the longer term. In sum, future empirical tests rely on theoretical specification of the magnitude and the timescale for investigating the links between societal gender (in)equalities and subsequent changes in people's ambivalent sexism.

Hostile Sexism Predicted Greater Gender Inequalities

Our final set of analyses examined whether the differences of hostile sexism and benevolent sexism over years predicted indices of gender (in)equality (*Primary Analysis 3b*), following the theoretical claim that people's endorsement of sexist attitudes functions to rationalize and maintain societal inequalities (e.g., Glick et al., 2000; Jost et al., 2008). We considered our meta-analytic evidence for this claim to be moderate (Table 7). Specifically, both women's and men's endorsement of hostile sexism predicted greater *gender inequality* scores, encompassing metrics of women's disadvantaged health care (e.g., higher maternal mortality rate), political representation (e.g., fewer seats in government), and career opportunities (e.g., greater gender gap in income). In addition, men's endorsement of hostile sexism predicted lower scores on the GDI, indicating greater disparities between men and women in markers of development (e.g., longevity, education, income). Indeed, these macrolevel markers correspond to empirical research examining people's endorsement of hostile sexism, including the provision of worse health care that deindividuates patients (e.g., Dyer et al., 2023; Gattino et al., 2020), heightened preferences to vote for politicians who are men (e.g., Bock et al., 2017; Glick, 2019), and greater workplace discrimination toward women (e.g., Masser & Abrams, 2004). However, tempering our conclusions, consistent interaction effects indicated that these associations were attenuated in later years of the data-frame.

An unexpected finding emerged in which men's endorsement of benevolent sexism predicted *lower* societal gender inequality after adjusting for hostile sexism. Specifically, evidence from the bivariate correlations indicated men's endorsement of benevolent sexism was associated with greater inequality (as expected), but once covarying for hostile sexism, men's higher endorsement of benevolent sexism in a country was linked with relatively *better* indicators of women's health care, political representation, and career opportunities relative to other countries. The positive association between benevolent sexism and lower gender inequality, after covarying for hostile sexism, was also moderated by year such that it was more prominent in relatively earlier years in the corpus of ambivalent sexism theory. We interpreted this finding in line with evidence that men's benevolent sexism often has benefits that specifically emerge in the context of mitigating the intergroup and interpersonal costs of hostile sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Glick et al., 1997; Overall et al., 2011). For instance, paralleling other meta-analytic evidence, men's greater endorsement of benevolent sexism predicts relatively *lower* levels of violence toward women, but only when statistically adjusting for the greater violence linked with hostile sexism (Agadullina et al., 2022). In sum, our meta-analytic evidence reaffirms that any benefits of benevolent sexism do not occur in absolute terms. Benevolent sexism appears to offer some benefits that are specifically situated as a counterweight to the

harms of hostile sexism *and* in the overarching context of men holding advantaged positions in society.

Our results emphasize that indices of countries' gender equality need reconsideration in the context of both hostile sexism and benevolent sexism. Our meta-analysis indicated that the links between sexist attitudes and countries' indices of inequalities have attenuated in later years. One possibility is that gender inequality indices may overlook the multiple harms that are linked with both hostile sexism and benevolent sexism (see Bareket & Fiske, 2023; Barreto & Doyle, 2023). For instance, gender gaps in rates of tertiary education and paid employment have substantially shrunk in most countries (United Nations Development Programme, 2024), but these statistics potentially overlook more persistent disparities linked with benevolent sexism. People who endorse benevolent sexism expect women to take on more household labor and childcare responsibilities, even when those women are in paid employment (Cikara et al., 2009; Koenig & Eagly, 2014; Overall & Hammond, 2018). Similarly, sexism can be prominent in situations when rates of employment appear to increase in parity: Men's endorsement of benevolent sexism is linked with support for hiring more women in the workforce, provided that those career roles are considered "feminine" (Hideg & Ferris, 2016; also see Macekura, 2020). In sum, there are nuanced ways in which sexist attitudes maintain men's societal advantages within relatively egalitarian contexts. Gender researchers can inform the development of country-level indices by considering the macrolevel implications of findings within their local research contexts (e.g., workplaces, universities), particularly for countries that are deemed to be "low" in gender inequality.

Is Benevolent Sexism a "Protection Racket"?

The protection racket effect describes the theorized process in which women endorse benevolent sexism due to a heightened need for protection and/or provision from men (Table 7). We considered evidence for two potential interpretations of the protection racket. The first interpretation is that women's endorsement of benevolent sexism should align more closely with men's endorsement of benevolent sexism in the context of greater hostile sexism (Glick et al., 2000). Our data replicated the finding that the gender gap between women's and men's endorsement of benevolent sexism diminishes in contexts in which men endorse hostile sexism more strongly (e.g., Glick et al., 2000; Zawisza et al., 2025). Indeed, some research emphasizes that women internalize benevolent sexism as a function of their perceptions of men's greater endorsement of benevolent sexism (see Hammond et al., 2016; Sibley et al., 2009), following the logic that women's adoption of sexism and associated relationship-focused roles can only benefit under the condition of alignment and is particularly costly if men reject benevolent sexism. Furthermore, in particularly hostile contexts, women's strong endorsement of benevolent sexism may function to set high protective standards that encourage men's benevolent sexism and thus closer alignment. By contrast, no evidence emerged in our models for the second interpretation of the protection racket effect that women's endorsement of benevolent sexism should *generally* be higher in contexts in which they perceive greater threats and hostility toward women (e.g., Fischer, 2006) or perceive that women face unsatisfiable economic disadvantages (e.g., Radke et al., 2018). Overall, women's internalization of benevolent sexism in response

to threat may be specifically conditioned on their perceptions of men's endorsement of benevolent sexism, a signal of the extent to which they can access, or encourage, men's protection and care for women.

Other evidence in our meta-analysis was consistent with the "racket" of the protection racket effect. Women's endorsement of benevolent sexism is theorized to occur partly as a means of finding safety in the face of hostile attitudes, but ultimately legitimizes the harm experienced by women (Bareket & Fiske, 2023; Barreto & Doyle, 2023; Glick et al., 2000). Our meta-analysis offered robust evidence that benevolent sexism goes hand-in-hand with hostile sexism, across the world and across time, particularly for women. Indeed, women's greater endorsement of benevolent sexism may be a precondition for women's stronger adoption and endorsement of hostile sexism (Osborne & Little, 2023; Sibley, Overall, & Duckitt, 2007). The "racket" in the protection racket effect is further exemplified by research into the costs of benevolent sexism, including that the safety and security offered to women are conditional on women accepting lower status and domestic-focused gender roles (Cikara et al., 2009; Glick & Fiske, 2001b; Hammond & Overall, 2017). Furthermore, although women may seek partners who endorse benevolent sexism for the protection and provision it promises (e.g., Alba et al., 2023; Lee et al., 2010; Travaglia et al., 2009), these relationships are not safe havens. Instead, women who endorse benevolent sexism fear violence from partners if their relationship fails to maintain conventional gender roles (Expósito et al., 2010), are more accepting of authoritarian restrictions made by their partners (Moya et al., 2007), and can even express toleration of intimate partner violence in the context of being protected from harassment from other men (Sengupta et al., 2024). In sum, the protectiveness of benevolent sexism has genuine appeal in contexts of overt hostility, but when women endorse benevolent sexism as a response to that hostility, it endangers their well-being.

Limits to Generalizability, Strengths, and Future Directions

Our meta-analytic approach treated endorsement of hostile sexism and benevolent sexism in a sample as an indicator of sexism in that country according to the time of publication, assuming relatively consistent lags between data collection and publication (e.g., Björk & Solomon, 2013). Supporting the validity of our measurement, our estimation of hostile sexism in different countries and years was positively associated with a proxy measure for hostile sexism from the WVS. Nonetheless, the current analyses were cross-sectional and preclude any directional or causal inference. Similar to prior studies investigating sexist attitudes across countries and years (e.g., Brandt, 2011), our data were not longitudinal because they did not measure the same people at each wave. A critical analytic limitation of our research was the inability to estimate the extent to which the trajectories of gender inequality, hostile sexism, and benevolent sexism *simultaneously* predicted one another over years (e.g., random-intercept cross-lagged panel models). Ideal analyses would require longitudinal and representatively sampled data on ambivalent sexism (e.g., Sibley, 2009) to examine the extent to which societal gender inequality and ambivalent sexism mutually reinforce one another. In sum, our data are initial rather than definitive evidence for the theoretical principles derived from ambivalent sexism theory (see Table 7).

The generalizability of our findings was also constrained by assumptions of the reliability of the measures of ambivalent sexism. The predominant approach to cross-cultural research on ambivalent sexism is collaboration with local researchers and utilizing their expertise to select the most appropriate version of the ASI (e.g., Glick et al., 2000; Kosakowska-Berezcka et al., 2024). Nonetheless, we did not have access to item-level data and so we could not statistically test for measurement invariance across countries. We adjusted for this limitation by selecting analytic models that allowed for random effects (i.e., each country could vary in the average level of hostile sexism or benevolent sexism *and* in the extent to which hostile sexism or benevolent sexism differed over time), and we did not compare particular countries. Our second measurement assumption was the temporal reliability of the ASI. It is possible that any differences in measures over years are due to different interpretations of items. For instance, relative to participants from the 1990s, participants in the 2020s may place more weight on items' depictions of heteronormative gender roles (e.g., that men are romantically "completed" by women; see Cross et al., 2021; Glick, 2023). If our results were due to increased disagreement with item-specific content, we cannot rule out the possibility that sexism itself has remained constant (or increased) over time. We join recommendations for research into the content of sexist attitudes (e.g., Glick, 2023), including into the intersection of attitudes about heterosexuality, romanticism, and gender essentialism.

Our meta-analysis had an inherent sampling bias determined by the locations of existing prejudice researchers (similar to Glick et al., 2000, 2004), meaning that most data were from the United States (39% of samples), Spain (12%), Turkey (7%), and the United Kingdom (5%; see *Supplemental Table S1*). Consequently, our meta-analytic models were relatively conservative tests of the links between sexist attitudes and inequality because they overrepresented Western (see Henrich et al., 2010) and Mediterranean (see Uskul et al., 2023) countries, countries that are typically egalitarian and "very high" in human development indicators of health care, education, and income (United Nations Development Programme, 2024). This sampling bias possibly contributed to the unexpected moderation effects in which countries with generally higher levels of hostile sexism (relative to the sample average) exhibited relatively magnified decreases in societal inequality over years. Perhaps researchers who lived in countries with higher sexism and shrinking gender inequalities were the most likely to be motivated and funded to conduct research on sexism. Conversely, in countries with increasing trajectories of sexist attitudes and gender inequalities, research on sexism is likely underfunded or suppressed and therefore would not be represented in any meta-analysis. Prioritizing research from underrepresented countries is necessary for the advancement of psychological science (e.g., Henrich et al., 2010) and is particularly critical for assessing the extent to which people's endorsement of ambivalent sexism increases gender inequality.

Finally, our data are openly available for collaborative research and expansion. Researchers could extend the dataframe with indices that test the theoretical perspective that sexism has qualitatively distinct harms for women, for men, and for nonbinary people (Bareket & Fiske, 2023; Connor et al., 2017; Glick, 2023; Hammond et al., 2020). Example additions are the inclusion of ambivalent sexism toward men (Glick et al., 2004) or alternative indices of gender inequality (Stoet & Geary, 2019). Second, future research could test theorized origins of sexist ideologies, such as the extent to which

people's values and worldviews about group competition and group coordination are, respectively, precursors to people's hostile sexism and benevolent sexism (see Claessens et al., 2020; Sibley, Overall, & Duckitt, 2007). Finally, the dataframe can be extended by recovering data from publications that omitted necessary information ($n = 373$) or aggregated measures together ($n = 89$), with a cautionary note: Data are likely easily obtained from recent publications compared to the earliest studies on ambivalent sexism. Incomplete recovery efforts biased toward more recent years will create systematic missingness in the dataframe. Altogether, we aim to support ongoing open science practices that will maximize the power for researchers to test the cross-cultural and cross-generational principles of ambivalent sexism theory.

Conclusions

Evidence for the fundamental principles of ambivalent sexism theory is well-founded upon cross-sectional and experimental studies but lacked any evidence from multiple countries over multiple timepoints. Our multilevel meta-analyses incorporated hundreds of studies from 27 years of ambivalent sexism theory to adjust for variance between countries and years. The year-to-year differences in hostile sexism and benevolent sexism were small but, counting in decades, represented a substantial decrease since the inception of ambivalent sexism theory (Glick & Fiske, 1996). We also affirmed a long-standing assumption that hostile sexism is strongly positively associated with benevolent sexism and thus that sexism should be considered "ambivalent." Unexpectedly, in the analyses examining changes over time, no evidence emerged to support the theoretical position that greater gender (in)equality in a country predicted people's endorsement of sexism in that country. Finally, some meta-analytic findings were consistent with the premise that sexism functions to "perpetuate male privilege" (Barreto & Doyle, 2023, p. 100) and works to "maintain control over women" (Bareket & Fiske, 2023): Men's and women's average endorsement of hostile sexism was associated with greater harm and disadvantage experienced by women in society (e.g., greater maternal mortality, lower political representation). Researchers can use these findings as a platform for mitigating sexism across the world, such as identifying the features of countries where sexism exhibited the most pronounced declines. Our meta-analysis encourages particular attention to benevolent sexism, which is often underestimated but robustly accompanies hostile sexism across the world. Effective indicators of "gender inequality" will account for theory on the harms of benevolent sexism but critically will rely on the development of theory on the timescales for people's perception of—and response to—societal inequalities.

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