

Ambivalent Sexism and Positive Illusions of Physical Attractiveness in Heterosexual Romantic Relationships

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AMBIVALENT SEXISM AND POSITIVE ILLUSIONS OF PHYSICAL
ATTRACTIVENESS IN HETEROSEXUAL
ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

By

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ABSTRACT
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While considerable research has been devoted to the impact that the mainstream media and parents have on body image, less is known about how romantic partners' beliefs and perceptions impact individuals' evaluations of both their physical selves and their relationships. This study examined the influence of individually-endorsed cultural sexism on romantic partners' tendency to hold positive illusions about their significant others' physical appearance and the impact of sexism and positive illusions of physical attractiveness on body esteem and relationship satisfaction. Evidence of positive illusions of physical attractiveness was found, but there was no significant association between gender and positive illusion endorsement. There was no significant correlation between men's benevolent sexism (BS) and their endorsement of positive illusions. Multiple regression analyses indicated that men's and women's endorsements of positive illusions did not significantly impact partners' body esteem. Instead, results suggest that a person's view of his/her self (i.e., self-ratings of attractiveness) most strongly impacts one's body esteem. Additionally, men's BS was found to positively impact women's Sexual Attractiveness body esteem, while women's BS positively impacted men's Physical Attractiveness body esteem. Women's BS was positively associated with their own Weight Concern body esteem while women's hostile sexism (HS) was found to have a negative impact on this body esteem dimension. Multiple regression analyses did not produce significant findings with regard to women's relationship satisfaction, while men's relationship satisfaction was found to be positively impacted by their positive illusions of partners' physical attractiveness. Implications of these findings are discussed.

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Men and women occupy the same social worlds but they often perceive and experience the same situations and contexts differently (Yoder & Kahn, 2003). While researchers have found that there are many more similarities between the two sexes than there are differences (Hyde, 2005), there are certain contexts that tend to elicit disparate experiences for women and men. Such discrepancies have been found to appear in situations that are of a highly gendered context (Yoder & Kahn, 2003), and it has been suggested that one's gendered world becomes particularly apparent when considering how people perceive and experience their physical selves (Franzoi, Vasquez, Sparapani, Frost, Martin, & Aebly, 2012). Gender differences tend to be found in contexts of the physical realm because such features define masculinity and femininity (e.g., Davis, 1990; Signorielli & Bacue, 1999) and the way one's body is supposed to look. In the area of body image, men and women seem to experience very different worlds, presumably because of the degree of importance that society places on physical perfection and the greater level of cultural scrutiny of the female body (Franzoi, 1995). Like many cultures, American culture emphasizes women's physical attractiveness, or the feminine *body-as-object* (Franzoi, 1995; Franzoi & Chang, 2000). Women learn from a young age that their physical attractiveness is important; they are taught that their beauty will be closely scrutinized and will often determine how they are accepted, valued, and treated by others (James, 2000).

Social scientists assert that objectification of the female body leads women to perceive their physical selves from an outsider's perspective, that is, as an object to be evaluated (e.g., Franzoi, 1995; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). For example, Fredrickson and Roberts' (1997) *objectification theory* argues that girls and women are acculturated

to internalize others' perspectives as a primary means of viewing their physical selves. This perspective on the self causes women to be highly aware of and concerned about their physical appearance (Tiggemann & Andrew, 2012), leading to habitual body monitoring and increased opportunities to experience negative affect, including feelings of shame and anxiety (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

Previous research suggests that while women are motivated to assess their bodies critically, men have the tendency to enhance their feelings of self-worth (Franzoi et al., 2012). When noting this gender tendency, Franzoi (1995) suggested that men often appear to engage in the *self-serving bias*, which is the tendency to perceive oneself in the best possible light (Miller & Ross, 1975). A host of studies have found evidence that men are more likely than women to engage in the self-serving bias regarding general life events (Maass & Volpato, 1989; Sedikides, Campbell, Reeder, & Elliot, 1998). Powell, Matacin, and Stuart (2001) and Franzoi, Kessenich, and Sugrue (1989) contend that men have the cultural freedom to engage in the self-serving bias regarding their physical selves that is largely unavailable to women. In other words, women are habitually aware of their bodies as objects of public scrutiny, regardless of whether the evaluation is good or bad. Men, on the other hand, are not nearly so inundated with incessant images or messages pertaining to high physical attractiveness standards, giving them the luxury of focusing on their bodies only when the evaluation is positive, which helps them to feel good about themselves. According to this thesis, men are better equipped by their social environment to protect their self-worth and maintain the positive beliefs they have about themselves by engaging in this self-serving bias, which is something that women are less likely to do given their social circumstances.

Cultural Sexism and Physical Attractiveness Standards

The immense exposure of women to media portrayals of physical perfection is likely an extension of a larger context of gender inequality. That is, variations of sexism are so thoroughly embedded within our culture that they are often a fundamental part of gender socialization within the family and experienced by women on a daily basis (Oswald, Franzoi, & Frost, 2012). From an early age, girls learn the many ways that society expects them to look and behave. Social role theory (Eagly, 1987) asserts that there are social structural aspects of gender relations that lead to distinctions in expectations for men and women. This theory also contends that the assignment of specific roles to each gender is inevitably accompanied by particular demands for men and women to portray certain traits and engage in certain behaviors. This segregation of roles generates stereotypical expectations, which prescribe the ways in which women ought to act (Rudman & Glick, 2008), as well as the way that they ought to look.

Social prescriptions of behavior have been referred to as “injunctive norms,” or socially enforced expectations for the way individuals should act that elicit punishment when they do not conform to the role society has set for them (Burgess & Borgida, 1999; Cialdini & Trost, 1998). Such a restricted role in the gender realm can be difficult for women of the 21st century to adhere to in the light of increased opportunities due to legislation that curbs gender inequality. Yet, even with such legislation, women who deviate from traditional societal “norms” and expectations still often face negative consequences. Non-conformist women who act in an independent and career-oriented manner are often accused of violating society’s expectations for the traditional feminine gender role. As a result, these women likely encounter negative reactions from both men

and women in society who adhere to traditional gender roles. These negative, culturally based reactions are indicative of hostile sexism (HS), which categorizes these non-conforming women into an adversarial stance with mainstream society in which they are depicted as trying to unjustly usurp men's social power and societal positions by employing their sexuality or feminine ideology (Glick & Fiske, 2001).

Benevolent Sexism

While the majority of past research on sexism has concentrated primarily on the “iron fisted” hostile style of gender-based intolerance, Ambivalent Sexism Theory (Glick & Fiske, 2001) asserts that there is another important style that must not be overlooked: benevolent sexism (BS), the figurative “velvet glove” of sexism that covers its “iron fist.” In contrast to HS, which involves negative attitudes directed toward women who embody nontraditional gender roles, BS is revealed when men idealize women in traditional feminine roles. According to Ambivalent Sexism Theory and other feminist critiques (e.g., Jackman, 1994), sexist men act warmly toward subordinate women, offering patronizing affection as a reward for these women “knowing their place” rather than rebelling against injunctive cultural norms. In other words, women who adhere to stereotypically feminine roles are figuratively placed on pedestals by these culturally sexist – and socially dominantly oriented – men: cherishing, adoring, and acting benevolently toward these women (Oswald et al., 2012). Benevolent sexism is believed to uphold men's intimate interdependence on women and is comprised of three specific features: protective paternalism (e.g., “Men should protect and provide for women”), idealization of women as delicate and “pure”, and emphasis of heterosexual intimacy (e.g., “Every man needs a woman he adores”) (Moya, Glicke, Exposito, & Hart, 2007).

Benevolent sexism can be difficult to identify when it is expressed in a social context because it blends apparent affection with covert dominance. Indeed, research has indicated that both men and women have a hard time detecting benevolent sexism (Chisango & Javangwe, 2012). Women who endorse BS seem to assume that male romantic partners' motives are not malicious and tend to embrace the imposition of protective restrictions from their partners even when they recognize them as discriminatory. Women who reject BS, on the other hand, are much more skeptical of men's motives but are still, at times, willing to accept imposed restrictions as acts of love. For these latter women, this occurs if their partners justify imposing such constraints as concerns for "*your* well-being" and wisely avoid adding "as a woman" to the end of their argument (Moya et al., 2007). Knowledge and awareness of different styles of sexism and accompanying discriminatory acts does not necessarily allow one to evade the consequences. Sexism can be subtle and disguised, which makes it all the more difficult to identify and challenge.

In addition to the often subtle manner in which BS is employed in various social contexts, BS has been found to have profound effects on women's identity. As previously stated, BS is closely linked to the emphasis of traditional gender role divisions in which women are assigned to the relational domain and men are assigned to the task-achievement domain (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Past research has indicated that women who endorse traditional gender roles tend to place less value on achievement-related activities than women who do not endorse traditional gender roles (Eccles, Barber, & Jozefowicz, 1999; Rudman and Heppes, 2003). In a study examining the impact of sexism on women's self-descriptions, researchers found that exposure to BS increased the extent to

which Dutch female college students defined themselves in relational terms and decreased the extent to which they emphasized their task-related characteristics (Barreto, Ellemers, Piebinga, & Moya, 2010). Sinclair, Huntsinger, Skorinko, and Hardin (2005) also discovered that American female college students' self-defined identities were more consistent with the traditional female stereotype when they interacted with a benevolent sexist individual than when they interacted with someone who held egalitarian and non-traditional views of women.

Why might this alteration in self-description occur? One possibility is that since BS tends to go unrecognized as sexism, while HS is easily identified, women are more likely to adapt to benevolent sexist views of themselves than to hostile sexist views (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005; Killianski & Rudman, 1998). While HS is an important factor to consider when examining interactions between men and women, it was not the primary focus of this study. Instead, BS was expected to be more prevalent within romantic relationships, especially during the early stages. The impact of both BS and HS on men's and women's experiences with romantic relationships was examined.

Benevolent Sexism, Body Ideals, and Body Esteem

One of the primary theses of the current research is that the prevalence of sexist ideology in our culture greatly impacts women's perceptions of their physical selves by shaping society's standards for the female physical ideal. For example, various social scientists have documented the way ideal female body types have transitioned from voluptuousness in the 1940s and 1950s to very slender and almost boy-like prototypes in the 1990s to the present day (Forbes, Doroszewicz, Card, & Adams-Curtis, 2004; Lamb,

Jackson, Cassiday, & Priest, 1993). It has been suggested that these increased restrictions for women's expected body size followed a trajectory parallel - yet in opposition to - that of their economic gains in the social/occupational arena. Thus, at a time when social changes greatly increased women's rights, available roles, and opportunities, societal expectations of female body types have become increasingly inflexible and unrealistic (Brumberg, 1997).

Within the social context of improved cultural opportunities for women in previously sex-segregated social venues combined with more restrictive cultural feminine attractiveness standards, social scientists have expended considerable resources to more closely examine the associations between sexism and body ideals and practices and, perhaps most importantly, their influence on women's body esteem. One such study looked at Western physical attractiveness ideals (i.e. the importance of beauty and the belief that the female body requires modification in order to be beautiful) and how they relate to the endorsement of cultural sexism. It was found that endorsement of these Western beauty standards and practices was associated with hostility toward women, endorsement of traditional sexism, HS, and, to a lesser degree, BS (Forbes Collinworth, Jobe, Braun, & Wise, 2007).

Various researchers propose that because one aspect of the feminine gender role is to construct a physically attractive self to present to others in everyday life (Forbes et al., 2007; Mahalik, Morray, Coonerty-Femiano, Ludlow, Slattery, & Smiler, 2005), women who endorse BS or who are even exposed to BS should be more attentive to cultural beauty norms (Shepherd, Erchull, Rosner, Taubenberger, Forsyth Queen, & McKee, 2011). In support of this hypothesis, Shepherd and colleagues (2011) discovered that

women who witnessed a benevolently sexist act (e.g., a man bending down to pick up a box and saying “I’ll get that for you”, followed by the woman replying, “Oh, okay”) reported higher levels of body surveillance and body shame than women who did not witness a sexist act. These results highlight the negative effects that BS can have on women’s body esteem. Such findings provide evidence supporting the notion that BS not only reinforces traditional and stereotypical gender roles, but it can also lead women to experience intrusive thoughts about themselves and their bodies. That is, BS might prompt women to survey their bodies more and, as a result, they might feel more shame regarding their own physical appearance (Shepherd et al., 2011).

While the research discussed thus far highlights ways in which exposure to benevolently sexist acts can be detrimental to women and negatively influence the way they feel about themselves (e.g., Roberts, 2004; Shepherd et al., 2011), other studies have found evidence that BS can provide women with experiences that enhance their assessments of their physical selves. For instance, Oswald and colleagues (2012) found that women’s benevolently sexist experiences were positively correlated with all three dimensions of women’s body esteem, whereas their hostile sexist experiences were negatively correlated with their body esteem. These findings are consistent with an earlier study conducted by Franzoi (2001) that also found a positive relationship between women’s endorsement of BS and their body esteem and a negative relationship with their endorsement of HS. That is, women who endorsed BS tended to feel better about specific body features indicative of sexual attractiveness, including face, chest/breasts, nose, and lips, while women who endorsed HS felt less positive about these same body features. Oswald and colleagues (2012) also found familial sexism – specifically, fathers’

endorsement of BS – to be positively correlated with daughters’ body esteem on the dimensions of Weight Concern and Physical Condition. That is, fathers who endorsed benevolently sexist beliefs were more likely to have daughters with positive body esteem. These findings present a somewhat controversial idea that living in a benevolently sexist familial environment may be associated with less weight anxiety among young women (Oswald et al., 2012).

Knowing that familial experiences with BS impact the way women feel about their physical selves encourages additional research to further understand the effects of gender socialization in other contexts - primarily experiences with sexism - on women. Indeed, early family relationships have a large impact on individuals’ development and often lay the framework for future relationships. For instance, research examining paternal influence on daughters’ dating socialization has demonstrated that daughters who report high levels of positive paternal influences from childhood tend to be attracted to relationship partners who reminded them of their fathers (Hall, 2009). Thus, parents play an important role in gender socialization of their children, but are there other contexts - significant relationships perhaps - in which experiences with cultural sexism are either detrimental or beneficial to women? Specifically, how does endorsement of cultural sexism in romantic relationships impact women? Of particular interest is the impact of such sexism on women’s satisfaction in romantic relationships and the way women feel about their physical selves. Such analyses could reveal important information about the ways in which experiences with sexism - and the related evaluations of the physical self – impact attitudes of women involved in heterosexual romantic relationships.

Physical Attractiveness, Cultural Sexism, and Romantic Relationships

Sociocultural theory argues that women have historically been denied power and are often considered objects for men to exchange in the social marketplace (e.g., Howard, Blumstein, & Schwartz, 1987). The quality - or the beauty - of this exchange object is an indicator of a man's social status in his group, and thus, physically attractive women have high cultural value. Because of their historically low status and restricted ability to socially advance, women have traditionally been forced to link their social position with the status of their mate. So, women who have internalized traditional gender role beliefs have historically sought men who are socially dominant and can be "good providers" (Bernard, 1981). Kasser and Sharma (1999) examined data from 37 cultures and found that women were more likely to indicate a preference for mates who would be good providers when their culture offered limited educational and financial opportunities. Age has also been considered to be a variable in this gender-based attraction equation, with men preferring younger women with domestic skills and women seeking older men with resources (Feingold, 1992; Johannesen-Schmidt & Eagly, 2002).

This tendency for women to seek providers, however, has been found to diminish in sexually egalitarian societies where the traditional gender-based division of labor is weakened (Eagly & Wood, 1999). In other words, according to the sociocultural perspective, recent social advances made by many women in European and North American countries (e.g., higher pay and increased social status) should shift attractiveness preferences of both women and men. Thus, presumably, if women have their own careers and economic stability, they would no longer require socially dominant

partners as a means of obtaining resources or higher social status. Women, therefore, should come to place more importance on physical attractiveness in men, and men should seek higher economic status in women. In fact, recent studies suggest that such changes may be occurring. For instance, Eagly and Wood (1999) found that increasing female empowerment decreased women's preference for men's earning potential. Koyama, McGain and Hill (2004) also demonstrated that the importance women place on earning potential in a mate decreases as their feminist attitude score increases. Similarly, Kasser and Sharma (1999) reported a negative association between educational equality and women's preference for men to have extensive resource-acquisition abilities. That is, as women's level of education matched men's, the less importance women placed on men's ability to obtain resources, arguably because women would be able to acquire them on their own.

While it is understandable that women's mate preferences shift as they gain financial independence, it becomes more complicated to forecast resultant changes in men's mate preferences. That is, men's expectations might not be so easily altered. Historically, men have subjugated women, and cultural sexism has produced cultural beauty standards to keep women "in their place" relative to men (Freedman, 1986; Wolf, 1991). Thus, generally, women's physical beauty has been paramount for men seeking a mate. As men become accustomed to women's increasing financial autonomy and social progress, could their preferences for female mates change? Would value placed on women's physical appearance wane while that placed on women's earning potential rises? Evolutionary psychologists would likely caution against expecting such a change.

Indeed, sociocultural theory provides a strong argument for alterations in mate preferences: as the world around us changes, we adapt and change with it. However, foundational influences such as evolutionary-based explanations of attractiveness preferences should also be considered since they are likely relatively immune to sociocultural beliefs and shifts. That is, evolutionary factors may have caused men to be dominant over women due to natural selection tendencies, which may have resulted in the formation of both men and women's attractiveness preferences. In fact, evolutionary psychologists have suggested that women needed to behave adaptively in the presence of aggressive, dominant males because choosing a dominant partner, was, in essence, selecting a mate who increased her potential to survive and successfully procreate (Graziano, Jensen-Campbell, Todd, & Finch, 1997). Over time, these preferences - inherited traits for reproductive success - were passed down from generation to generation and subsequently classified as socioculturally based attractiveness preferences (e.g., men seeking qualities indicating a woman's ability to procreate, including youth, health, and beauty; women's desire for qualities indicating a man's ability to obtain resources, namely, earning potential and status) (Pines, 2001). These enduring evolutionary influences likely work simultaneously with sociocultural variables to construct contemporary attractiveness preferences. Considering these evolutionary forces within the context of much more rapidly changing sociocultural forces of women's earning power, even though contemporary women are becoming less dependent on men for their social status, these women and men may still have their attractiveness preferences substantially shaped by evolutionary-based natural selection tendencies. In other words, although social beliefs may often be a better match for current social

circumstances or physical environment, evolutionary-based genetic tendencies are also going to continue shaping human thinking and behavior even if those tendencies are not well-matched with the current social environment.

In addition to acknowledging the possible impact of evolutionary-based tendencies on sociocultural shifts in attractiveness preferences, men's and women's attitudes toward these cultural changes should also be considered. Women's social advancement has impacted recent alterations in the process of mate selection (e.g., Eagly & Wood, 1999; Koyama et al., 2004), but the extent to which men and women accept or disapprove of progressive reform with regard to gender equality should also be assessed. Career opportunities and earning potential may be leveling the "playing field" for women, but these changes might be difficult for men - and women - to embrace. Thus, it is possible that men's and women's gender-related attitudes and beliefs may influence their experiences in heterosexual romantic relationships.

Customarily, attitudes regarding the shift toward nontraditional gender arrangements in the workplace have been analyzed by examining individuals who vary in terms of their endorsement of the traditional division of labor (Johannesen-Schmidt & Eagly, 2002). Because occupational gender equality typically has been defined by women entering the career world and reducing their participation in domestic labor rather than men reducing their paid labor and increasing participation in domestic responsibilities (Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer, & Robinson, 2000), research on attitudes regarding gender equality, in turn, involves measuring endorsement of the traditional female gender role. It has been argued that the extent to which heterosexual individuals endorse traditional gender roles plays a large part in not only identifying the characteristics they seek in a

mate, but also in how they individually behave in and feel about their romantic relationships. For instance, having a positive attitude toward traditional gender roles tends to shape marriages based on traditional division of responsibilities and leads men to seek younger women as homemakers and women to seek older men who can be good providers (Johannesen-Schmidt & Eagly, 2002).

Glick and Fiske's (1996) Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI) has often been used to measure endorsement of the traditional female role, and thereby, endorsement of the traditional relationship between women and men. The ASI includes scales of BS (approval of women in traditional roles) and HS (disapproval of women in nontraditional roles). Johannesen-Schmidt and Eagly (2002) utilized the ASI to assess men's and women's endorsement of the traditional female role and its association with mate preferences. Results indicated that both HS and BS were related to mate selection criteria. As expected, it was found that men who endorsed the traditional female gender role (manifested in HS or BS) preferred wives younger than them and placed importance on possessing a mate with traditional female qualities. Women who endorsed HS placed importance on mate's earning potential, whereas endorsement of benevolently sexist views indicated that, in addition to mate's earning potential, women preferred husbands to be older than them and placed more importance on embodying and fulfilling the traditional female role. These findings reveal the expectations that benevolently sexist women have for their marriages. They likely hold an idealized or romanticized image of marriage as a relationship in which they are adored and protected by their husbands (Johannesen-Schmidt & Eagly, 2002).

Positive Illusions and Evaluations of Self and Significant Others

The aforementioned research discussed preferences of physical appearance and strategies utilized by men and women while searching for a mate that relate to culturally-based sexist beliefs and attitudes, with an eye toward how such preferences and strategies might influence the nature and quality of existing romance. In a somewhat different yet related vein, once in a romantic relationship, do partners start to view each other in a more favorable light regardless of their physical appearance? In other words, once a relationship is established, how do individuals evaluate the physical attractiveness of their partners?

Evaluations of physical attractiveness have typically been divided into two categories: evaluation of the self and evaluation of others. When it comes to self-assessments of physical appearance, women tend to make judgments that are self-critical while men make judgments that are self-hopeful (Franzoi et al., 2012). This discrepancy is likely based on the orientations that men and women seem to have toward their bodies (Franzoi, 1995; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997), as well as men's seemingly greater ability and/or tendency to engage in the self-serving bias and perceive themselves positively (Powell et al., 2001). The literature on self and other comparisons indicates that, overall, people who live in individualist cultures, such as the United States, typically see themselves in more positive, idealized ways than their actual characteristics warrant (Alicke, 1985; Brown, 1986; Taylor & Brown, 1988).

Self-enhancing perceptions are prevalent, including forms of "illusion" such as excessively positive self-evaluations, unrealistic optimism about the future, and

exaggerated perceptions of control (Martz, Verette, Arriaga, Slovik, Cox, & Rusbult, 1998). Such illusions are believed to be normal and representative of adaptive functioning in cultures that conceive of the mature self as being both unique and independent of others, because they help a person differentiate between himself or herself and other people. What's more, they allow one to distinguish between people with whom one has special relationships and other persons (Martz et al., 1998). Studies examining comparisons of the self, intimates, and others (e.g., Hall & Taylor, 1976; Van Lange, 1991) find that people tend to evaluate themselves more positively than they evaluate people with whom they have intimate relationships, and they evaluate these intimates more positively than does the average person (Taylor & Brown, 1988; Wood, 1989). These findings are consistent with optimal distinctiveness theory (Brewer, 1991), which asserts that self-other differentiation happens along a continuum (e.g., self > intimate other > stranger). More specifically, differentiating between an intimate and a stranger may involve incorporating the intimate into one's social identity and thereby perceiving the intimate more positively than perhaps warranted (Brewer, 1991).

An especially important intimate relationship is the one formed by romantic partners, which is believed to be one of the central facets of one's identity (Aron, Aron, Tudor, & Nelson, 1991). Consistent with optimal distinctiveness theory, in the early stages of romantic relationships, people often become engrossed in their partners' positive qualities, and it is not uncommon for people captivated by romantic love to hold an idealized view of the person with whom they are in a relationship. This romanticized perception is the product of seeing what one wants to see in a partner instead of being limited by accepting the reality of his or her actual traits (Martz et al., 1998).

In order to avoid experiencing doubt about whether one's partner is a good match, a person may portray him or her in a manner in which flaws are seen in the best possible light (Murray & Holmes, 1993, 1994). Several studies have, for instance, found that people often rate their partner in an overly positive manner on traits such as "kind" and "intelligent," a phenomenon that has been referred to as *positive illusions* (Murray & Holmes, 1997; Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996b). This maximization of significant others' virtuous attributes and minimization of negative qualities is believed to serve an important function: it fuels peoples' hopes for the success of the relationship (Holmes & Boon, 1990), while also avoiding post-cognitive dissonance that their partner choice was flawed (Cooper, 2007; Gilovich, Medvec, & Chen, 1995). That is, people in satisfying and trusting relationships are often able to quiet any nagging doubts that may arise and find a sense of conviction by overemphasizing their reasons for commitment – by seeing their partners and their relationships in the best light possible (Murray, 2001). The desire to concentrate on positivity and avoid perceiving any negativity plays a role in strengthening a person's belief that their partner is truly the "right" person (e.g., Brehm, 1988; Brickman, 1987; Campbell, Lackenbauer, & Muise, 2006). In fact, it has been suggested that relationships that are stable and satisfying often reflect peoples' ability to see imperfect partners in idealized ways (Murray et al., 1996b).

Research assessing positive illusions in romantic relationships has indicated that people often see their partners in a more positive light than partners see themselves (e.g., Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996a). Such idealized perceptions have also been found to predict higher levels of relationship satisfaction. For instance, when individuals in short-term dating relationships are perceived more positively by their partners they also report

higher levels of intimacy in their relationships (Swann, De La Ronde, & Hixson, 1994). Overall, people tend to be happier in relationships when they idealize their partners and their partners look beyond the reality of their self-reported perceptions and see the best in them (Knee, Nanayakkara, Vietor, Neighbors, & Patrick, 2001; Murray et al., 1996a).

How long do the effects of positive illusions last in a relationship? Murray and colleagues (1996b) conducted a subsequent study further investigating the possible long-term impact of holding positive illusions in romantic relationships. In this study, dating couples who had been together for an average of 18 months were asked to complete measures of idealization and well-being three times over a twelve month period. Results showed that relationships were most likely to endure - even during times of conflict – when partners held idealized views of one another. Additionally, couples who reported idealizing each other more at the initial assessment (i.e., early in their relationship) also reported greater increases in relationship satisfaction and decreases in number of conflicts during the year. Thus, idealization of partners led to more satisfying and less distressing relationships (Murray et al., 1996b).

In 2006, Miller, Niehuis, and Huston examined the long-term consequences of idealization in romantic relationships, particularly in marriage. To do so, they collected data from 168 heterosexual newlywed couples who participated in a thirteen-year longitudinal study about marriage. In this case, idealization was defined as the tendency for people to perceive their partner as more agreeable than would be expected based on their previous reports of their partner's behaviors. Results demonstrated that men and women who idealized one another reported being more in love as newlyweds. Longitudinal analyses suggested that these couples who idealized one another as

newlyweds were, in turn, less likely to experience declines in love over the course of their marriage (Miller et al., 2006). On the other hand, however, recent research has demonstrated a negative association between the length of a relationship and positive illusions, suggesting that, as the relationship proceeds and partners get to know each other better, the strength of positive illusions may decrease (Swami, Stieger, Haubner, Voracek, & Furnham, 2009). These findings propose that reality may be potentially dangerous for relationship illusions (Murray & Holmes, 1997), and that positive illusions may be strongest during the initial stages of a relationship. This is consistent with the two-component theory of romantic love (passionate love versus companionate love), with the earlier-stage of passionate love representing more of an idealized view of one's partner (Hatfield, 1982).

Positive Illusions of Physical Attractiveness

Within the field of psychology, there has been increasing interest in the area of positive illusions and their utility within romantic relationships. One particular form of positive illusions in intimate relationships that has received less attention involves ratings of partner physical attractiveness (Swami & Furnham, 2008). Perceptions of physical attractiveness are important when it comes to romantic relationships because people tend to place a lot of emphasis on the physical appearance of potential mates (e.g., Buss, Larsen, Westen, & Semmelroth, 1992; Dijkstra & Buunk, 1998; Rhodes, 2006). Believing that one's partner is very attractive also likely improves the satisfaction one feels in the relationship. For instance, people may feel lucky or fortunate if their partner is beautiful or handsome (Barelds & Dijkstra, 2009).

People also often compare their partner's attractiveness to those of others. This happens constantly as the media perpetually exposes individuals to images of extremely attractive same-sex and other-sex targets who embody society's physical ideal (e.g., Dittmar, 2005; Englis, Solomon, & Ashmore, 1994; Groesz, Levine, & Murnen, 2002; Posavac & Posavac, 1998). Exposure to these kinds of images can encourage people to have unrealistically high expectations that are not attainable for anyone – including one's partner. Comparing one's partner to unattainable images in the media can lead individuals to feel dissatisfied with their partner or even cause them to fall out of love (Kenrick, Gutierrez, & Goldberg, 1989). Impractical physical attractiveness standards can be detrimental to one's own body esteem, body esteem of one's partner, and relationship quality. Positive illusions about partner's physical attractiveness, on the other hand, may serve to protect those involved in romantic relationships against some of the detrimental effects of viewing media images portraying unrealistic physical attractiveness standards. Holding positive illusions may therefore be beneficial in maintaining the quality of romantic relationships by preventing individuals from comparing their partners to images of the physical ideal and becoming dissatisfied with their significant other's looks. Few studies, however, have examined whether individuals also hold positive illusions about partners' physical appearance and what this might mean for couples in terms of relationship quality.

Contemporary research endeavors (e.g., Barelds-Dijkstra & Barelds, 2008) have worked to fill gaps in the literature by including specific assessments of physical attractiveness ratings and perceptions. Evidence of positive illusions in romantic relationships was observed: people did indeed believe that their partner was more

attractive than the partner thought himself/herself to be. Men and women also reported that they believed they found their partners to be more physically attractive than they thought other members of the other sex would find them to be. The fact that individuals acknowledged that they found their partners to be more attractive than they would be to members of the other sex is interesting because it suggests that, at least to a certain degree, people are aware that they hold a positively biased view of their partner's physical appearance (Barelds-Dijkstra & Barelds, 2008).

Theories such as the previously mentioned optimal distinctiveness theory have asserted that individuals tend to view themselves more positively than they view intimates and other people (Brewer, 1991), and in fact, several studies (e.g., Hoorens, 1995; Hoorens & Harris, 1998) have shown that most people think that they are better than 'average' others in a variety of domains. In the aforementioned study, however, both men and women rated their partner as more physically attractive than partners rated themselves, which is inconsistent with optimal distinctiveness theory (Barelds-Dijkstra & Barelds, 2008). Indeed, a number of studies have similarly demonstrated that individuals tend to rate their partners as significantly more attractive than they rate themselves. This has been found to be true for both global ratings of attractiveness as well as evaluations of individual body parts (Swami, 2011; Swami, Furnham, Georgiades & Pang, 2007; Swami et al., 2009; Swami, Waters, & Furnham, 2010). However, these studies compared self and partner physical attractiveness ratings, but they did not incorporate any external standards (i.e., from a third party) to which they were able to compare participants' reported perceptions. So, it might be the case that people who rate their partner as more attractive than they rate themselves actually have partners who are more

physically attractive (Barelds & Dijkstra, 2009). If this is so, then these individuals were reporting reality instead of positive illusions.

Indeed, within the literature on positive illusions of physical attractiveness there is variability in the way in which positive illusions have been defined. Some social scientists have measured positive illusions by examining the “love-is-blind-bias,” which demonstrates that people tend to rate their partners significantly more positively than they rate themselves (e.g., Swami et al., 2007; Swami et al., 2009; Swami et al., 2010; Swami & Allum, 2012). Others have measured positive illusions by observing that people rate their partners significantly more positively than partners rate themselves (e.g., Barelds-Dijkstra & Barelds, 2008; Barelds & Dijkstra, 2009). Murray and colleagues (2000) asserted that positive illusions about one’s partner occur when a person’s ratings of their partner are more positive than ratings that reflect a more objective perspective. When partners’ self-reports are used as the sole reality benchmark, positive illusions may be affected not only by a person’s propensity to distort the physical appearance of his/her partner, but also by the partner’s propensity to distort his/her own appearance (Barelds, Dijkstra, Koudenberg, & Swami, 2011). Such distortion likely results in an underestimation of positive illusions. Thus, to properly establish whether positive illusions exist, individuals’ ratings of partners’ physical attractiveness should be compared with some other external ratings, such as the ratings of objective others (Murray et al., 2000; Barelds-Dijkstra & Barelds, 2008). Barelds and colleagues (2011) added observer judgments as a “benchmark” in their research examining positive illusions of physical attractiveness by having external judges view photographs of each participant and rate his/her attractiveness. The current study also utilized external judges’

ratings in positive illusion analyses, measuring positive illusions by comparing participants' ratings of their partners to the ratings of external judges. Thus, in this study, positive illusions are defined as: participants rating their partners more positively than external judges rate these same partners (i.e., partner ratings minus external judges' ratings).

Physical Attractiveness Positive Illusions and Relationship Quality

In accordance with previous research on positive illusions in romantic relationships (e.g., Murray & Holmes, 1997), positive illusions regarding partners' physical appearance have also been found to be associated with relationship satisfaction. People who hold positive illusions about their partner's physical attractiveness report higher relationship satisfaction and indicate that they deal more constructively with problems in their relationship (Barelds & Dijkstra, 2009; Swami et al., 2009). It has been asserted that holding such positive illusions is likely a normal part of maintaining relationship satisfaction and commitment (e.g., Rusbult, van Lange, Wildschut, Yovetich, & Verette, 2000) because they buffer self-esteem and create better relationships (e.g., Taylor & Brown, 1988) primarily during the early stages of romance. Indeed, longitudinal studies have demonstrated the importance of positive illusions in producing feelings of satisfaction within the relationship by revealing the predictive power of positive illusions with regard to relationship quality (e.g., Miller et al., 2006; Murray et al., 1996b).

Positive illusions about the physical attractiveness of one's partner have been suggested to enhance the quality of a relationship for a number of reasons. First, because

believing that one's partner is good-looking may increase levels of sexual satisfaction. Positive illusions may also facilitate relationship-enhancing attributions and help partners accept and overcome their weaknesses, differences, and doubts (e.g., McNulty & Karney, 2004; Murray & Holmes, 1997; Murray et al., 1996a). While initial attraction usually involves idealized images of dating partners, these positive illusions may enhance perceptions of the relationship, and, in turn, also boost one's self-perceptions (Brehm, Miller, Perlman, & Campbell, 2002; Flannagan, Marsh, & Fuhrman, 2005). Ultimately, such illusions may be advantageous for relationships (e.g., prolonging feelings of love) as well as for an individual's health and general well-being (Swami et al., 2009).

To summarize our review of the literature discussed thus far, in the current study, the aforementioned lines of research were combined, examining the influence of cultural sexism on men's and women's evaluations of themselves, their partners, and their romantic relationships. To target relationships in the early stages - when positive illusions are expected to be prevalent (Swami et al., 2009) – college students were recruited. While a number of studies have examined positive illusions pertaining to personality characteristics (e.g., Brehm, 1988; Brickman, 1987, Campbell et al., 2006; Murray & Holmes, 1997; Murray et al., 1996a, 1996b), fewer have investigated illusions of partners' physical attractiveness (Barelds & Dijkstra, 2009; Barelds et al., 2011; Swami et al., 2009). This study installed appropriate benchmarks to assess whether positive illusions of physical attractiveness actually exist by not only comparing participants' ratings of his/her partner to partners' self-ratings, but to those of external raters as well (e.g., Barelds et al., 2011). Additionally, the current study aimed to obtain information about certain types of relationships, or dynamics within these relationships, that are most

likely to produce and entertain positive illusions of physical attractiveness. For instance, since studies have shown that men have a seemingly greater ability to engage in the self-serving bias when evaluating themselves (e.g., Franzoi, 1995; Maass & Volpato, 1989; Sedikides et al., 1998), it was hypothesized that men would be more likely than women to hold rosy perceptions of their significant others as well.

Of utmost interest, however, was examining the extent to which endorsement of ambivalent sexism influences evaluations of partners' physical attractiveness in romantic relationships; specifically the way men's evaluations impact how women feel about themselves, especially their physical selves (i.e., body esteem). Until now, psychological research has not investigated the potential connection between sexism in romantic relationships, the development of positive illusions, and the impact on body esteem. Numerous studies have indicated, however, that men who endorse BS tend to prefer women who embody the traditional feminine gender role (e.g., Johannesen-Schmidt & Eagly, 2002; Pratto & Hegarty, 2000). Because these men tend to place women who conform to traditional gender roles on a figurative pedestal of honor, it was predicted that these benevolently sexist men would also place their female romantic partners on a pedestal when it comes to matters of physical appearance. Thus, it was hypothesized that benevolently sexist men would be more likely to hold positive illusions about their significant others' physical attractiveness; seeing them in a positive light, regardless of women's actual weight, shape, or size. It was also hypothesized that women who date these benevolently sexist men - and are placed on a figurative pedestal and idealized by their partners in terms of appearance - would report more positive body esteem because they likely feel good about themselves and the way they look.

Indeed, the aforementioned research conducted by Oswald and colleagues (2012) demonstrated that benevolently sexist experiences for women were associated with higher levels of body esteem while hostile sexist experiences were associated with lower levels of body esteem (Oswald et al., 2012). So, in the current study, the extent to which men endorse the traditional female gender role was expected to be related to how complimentary they were when rating their romantic partners' physical appearance. Men's endorsement of BS was expected to positively correlate with their ratings of their significant others' physical appearance and with female partners' body esteem. Men's endorsement of HS, though, was expected to negatively correlate with their ratings of their partners' physical attractiveness and female significant others' body esteem. Thus, it was hypothesized that men's BS would positively correlate with women's Sexual Attractiveness and Weight Concern body esteem dimensions, while men's HS would negatively correlate. Hypotheses regarding the Physical Condition body esteem dimension were not posited; analyses concentrated on the two dimensions of body esteem emphasizing women's physical attractiveness, or the feminine body-as-object (Franzoi, 1995; Franzoi & Chang, 2000).

This study also aimed to examine the impact of women's positive illusions of men's physical attractiveness on men's body esteem. However, in this case, because endorsement of ambivalent sexism represents hostile and benevolent attitudes toward women, neither BS nor HS was expected to influence men's body esteem on any dimension. That is, women's endorsement of sexism was not expected to influence the way men feel about their bodies. Women's positive illusions of partners' physical attractiveness, however, were expected to positively impact men's body esteem on the

dimensions of Physical Attractiveness and Upper Body Strength. As with women's body esteem, hypotheses regarding men's Physical Condition body esteem dimension were not posited; analyses concentrated on the two dimensions of male body esteem also emphasizing men's physical attractiveness, or the body-as-object. Ultimately, while this study focuses on the degree to which men's and women's body esteem is impacted by positive illusions that one's partner holds, another important variable was also considered: individuals' own physical self-assessments. In other words, this study investigated the extent to which partners' positive illusions impact a person's body esteem as well as the extent to which a person's self-perceptions account for his/her body esteem.

In addition to determining the impact of sexism in romantic relationships on women's body esteem, the influence of such sexism on relationship quality was also measured in the current study. Research has provided evidence highlighting the benefits of positive illusions in romantic relationships with regard to relationship quality (e.g., Barelds & Dijkstra, 2009; Brehm, Miller, & Perlman, 2002; Flannagan, Marsh, & Furhman, 2005). In the present study, it was hypothesized that women who reported feeling good about their physical selves - most likely those being idealized by benevolently sexist men - would also report feeling positively about their relationships. Indeed, for women, body image has been found to influence sexual relations and intimate relationships (Ambwani & Strauss, 2007). Men's relationship satisfaction, on the other hand, was expected to be positively impacted by the positive illusions they hold about partners' physical attractiveness. In other words, the more attractive men believed their partners to be, the happier they would be.

Summary of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1a: Men would be more likely than women to hold positive illusions about their significant others' physical attractiveness.

Hypothesis 1b: Men would hold stronger positive illusions than women about their partners' physical attractiveness.

Hypothesis 2: Men's BS would be positively correlated with their tendency to hold positive illusions about their partners' physical attractiveness. No predictions were made about HS. While HS should be related to a more negative evaluation of women, the men in this study were involved in romantic relationships with the women they evaluated and a hostile sexist view would imply that the only thing women are good for is their beauty. Thus, men's romantic involvement with these women is a complicating factor. An analysis of the correlation between men's HS and men's positive illusions was conducted but predictions were not made regarding this factor. An additional analysis was conducted to determine whether benevolently sexist men were actually reporting positive illusions, or if they were simply dating more attractive women.

Hypothesis 3a: Men's positive illusions and women's self-ratings - along with men's benevolent sexist beliefs and women's benevolent sexist beliefs - would be positively correlated with women's Weight Concern body esteem and Sexual Attractiveness body esteem.

Hypothesis 3b: Men's hostile sexist beliefs and women's hostile sexist beliefs would be negatively correlated with women's Weight Concern body esteem and Sexual Attractiveness body esteem.

Hypothesis 4: Women's positive illusions and men's self-ratings would be positively correlated with men's Physical Attractiveness body esteem and Upper Body Strength body esteem.

Hypothesis 5a: Benevolent sexism (men's BS and women's BS) and women's positive illusions would have a positive impact on women's reported relationship satisfaction while hostile sexism (men's HS and women's HS) would have a negative impact on women's reported relationship satisfaction.

Hypothesis 5b: Men's positive illusions would have a positive impact on their (men's) reported relationship satisfaction.

Method

Participants

Participants included 202 students (101 couples) recruited from Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. All participants were involved in romantic relationships; both partners completed the survey. While this study invited heterosexual and homosexual couples to participate, no homosexual relationships were recruited; about 87.6% of participants identified as being "exclusively heterosexual." Relationship duration ranged from one month to 120 months ($M = 18.42$; $Median = 12$; $Mode = 5$; $SD = 20.38$). Ages of participants ranged from 18-31 with a mean age of 20.19 ($SD = 2.09$). About 73.8% of the participants were White/European American, 11.4% were Hispanic American, 6.4% were Asian American, 3.9% were biracial/multiracial, 1.5% identified as American Indian, 0.5% were Black/African American, and 2.5% identified as "other" ethnicities. Male participants had average BMIs of 25.05, ($SD = 4.31$), with a range of

18.46 to 41.80. Female participants had average BMIs of 21.87, ($SD = 2.51$), ranging from 16.83 to 30.54.

Materials

Demographic information. (Appendix B). Participants provided information regarding gender, age, height, weight, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, and duration of current relationship.

Body Mass Index (BMI). Participants' self-reported height and weight measurements were utilized to compute body mass index scores.

Photographs. Individual photographs were taken of all participants using a digital camera fixed on a tripod, facing a neutral white background. All photos were "headshots" from the shoulders up; pictures were used to obtain attractiveness ratings from a group of external judges who did not know the participants.

Body Esteem Scale (BES, Franzoi & Shields, 1984) (Appendix C). To assess various dimensions of body esteem, participants were asked to complete the Body Esteem Scale (Franzoi & Shields, 1984) which asks participants to indicate how they feel about 35 body parts and body functions. There are three subscales for each gender. Female subscales include: Sexual Attractiveness (e.g. nose, lips, chest/breasts), Weight Concern (e.g. waist, thighs, hips, legs), and Physical Condition (e.g. physical stamina, reflexes, muscular strength). Internal consistency when assessing each factor for women in the current study yielded coefficient alphas of .82 for Sexual Attractiveness, .86 for Weight Concern, and .85 for Physical Condition (Chronbach, 1951). The male subscales are: Physical Attractiveness (e.g. nose, lips, chin), Upper Body Strength (e.g. arms, chest, biceps), and Physical Condition (e.g. physical stamina, reflexes, energy level). Internal

consistency reliabilities when assessing each factor for men in the current study yielded coefficient alphas of .88 for Physical Attractiveness, .87 for Upper Body Strength, and .85 for Physical Condition. The Body Esteem scale has shown adequate convergent validity (Franzoi & Herzog, 1986; Franzoi & Shields, 1984). Items from a recently updated version of the BES were also added for potential analysis but were not utilized in this study (Frost, 2013).

Physical attractiveness measures. (Appendix F). Three physical attractiveness measures were utilized in this study: self-ratings, partner ratings, and external judges' ratings. (1) Each participant was asked to rate their own physical attractiveness using a Likert scale from 1 (very unattractive) to 100 (very attractive). (2) Each participant was also asked to rate the attractiveness of their significant other using a Likert scale from 1 (very unattractive) to 100 (very attractive). (3) Standardized, individual photographs were taken of each participant and used to generate average ratings of physical attractiveness for each participant. This physical attractiveness measure was obtained by having three male and three female judges, who were doctoral students in Marquette University's psychology department, evaluate the participants' standardized photos. Of the 202 participants, doctoral students had minimal to moderate interaction with two or three of the participants in roles as teaching assistants or research assistants in a class or lab. This was deemed not to be relevant; it would not affect results. Evaluations were based on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (very unattractive) to 100 (very attractive). Four judges holding the strongest consensus were selected (three males and one female). Judges' attractiveness ratings were correlated between the range of .51 and .64. Each participant's physical attractiveness measure was based on the average of the four judges' evaluations

($\alpha = .84$). Judge's ratings of participants ranged from 19-88 ($M = 56.6, S = 12.54$); ratings of men and women were moderately correlated, $r = .22, n = 202, p = .001$.

Physical attractiveness positive illusions. To assess for positive illusions, individuals' ratings of their partners' physical attractiveness were compared to external judges' ratings of partners' physical appearance. Therefore, positive illusions were identified when: participants rated their partners as more attractive than external judges rated the partners.

Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI, Glick & Fiske, 1997). (Appendices D & E). The ASI investigates the degree of participants' attitudes that support traditional feminine roles and characteristics (benevolent sexism), and those that display animosity toward women (hostile sexism). The scale consists of 22 items measured on a 6-point Likert scale (0 = *Strongly disagree*, 5 = *Agree strongly*). Item scores were summed to form the two subscales with higher numbers indicative of more endorsement of hostile and benevolent sexist beliefs. Participants were asked to complete the ASI twice; once reporting their own beliefs, the second time indicating the degree to which they believed their partner would agree or disagree with each statement using the same scale. For men, the coefficient alphas for the benevolent and hostile subscales were .80 and .82, respectively. For women, the coefficient alphas for the benevolent and hostile subscales were .81 and .84, respectively.

Relationship satisfaction. (Appendix G). The Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS; Hendrick, 1988) was utilized to assess relationship quality. The RAS is a generic measure of relationship satisfaction consisting of seven items rated on a Likert scale from 1 (low satisfaction) to 5 (high satisfaction). It has moderate to high correlations with

other measures of marital satisfaction and has good test-retest reliability. It is a unifactorial measure of relationship satisfaction. In the current study, the measure has mean inter-item correlations of .38 and .30 and coefficient alphas of .79 and .70 for men and women, respectively. The RAS also has consistent measurement properties across samples of ethnically-diverse and age-diverse couples, as well as partners seeking marital and family therapy which makes it an appropriate, useful and efficient measure for romantic relationships in a variety of research settings (Hendrick, Dicke, & Hendrick, 1998).

Procedure

Participants were recruited from Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Individuals were only invited to participate if they were currently involved in a romantic relationship and both partners were available and willing to participate simultaneously. Forty-nine couples completed participation in this study by signing up for and attending a laboratory testing session together, while fifty-two couples were approached by researchers on campus and solicited for participation. All participants signed an informed consent form before beginning the study. Couples completing the study in the lab were asked to complete a series of online questionnaires using Opinio. After completing the survey, participants had individual photographs taken with a digital camera fixed on a tripod and facing a neutral white background. All photos were full-body pictures and were used to obtain attractiveness ratings from a group of external judges who did not know the participants. The ratings of external judges were used to more accurately determine whether positive illusions of physical appearance truly exist in romantic relationships. After taking photographs, the height and weight of each participant was

measured by the researcher in the lab. Couples approached by researchers on Marquette University's campus completed a pen-and-paper version of the survey and provided self-reports of their height and weight. These couples also consented to having individual photographs taken. Researchers utilized neutral backgrounds for these photographs when possible. All participants were thanked for their participation and had the option of receiving \$5 in compensation or obtaining a certificate indicating that they had completed the study to obtain course credit/extra credit (as determined by individual professors).

The study took about 30 minutes to complete. Three-digit codes (e.g., 052) were assigned to each couple and kept on a confidential list secured in a locked laboratory. This code was manually entered into the electronic survey by the researcher to assist in correctly pairing couples for data analysis.

Results

The various statistical analyses are presented with a restatement of the hypotheses associated with the related set of analyses.

Positive Illusions of Physical Attractiveness

Two paired-samples *t*-tests were conducted to assess for positive illusions: (1) men's ratings of their partners were compared to external judges' ratings of female partners, and (2) women's ratings of their partners were compared to external judges' ratings of male partners. Evidence of positive illusions of physical attractiveness was found. Men rated their partners as significantly more attractive ($M = 89.79$, $SD = 8.81$) than external judges rated these same partners ($M = 58.71$, $SD = 13.83$), $t(100) = 22.27$, $p < .001$. The eta squared statistic (.83) indicated a large effect size. Women also rated their

partners as significantly more attractive ($M = 86.06$, $SD = 11.20$) than external judges rated these same partners ($M = 54.50$, $SD = 10.76$), $t(100) = 24.60$, $p < .001$. The eta squared statistic (.86) indicated a large effect size.

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare men's positive illusion scores to women's positive illusion scores in order to determine whether men or women held stronger positive illusions of their partners' physical attractiveness. This analysis compared the discrepancy between men's and women's ratings of their partners and external judges' ratings of the partners (i.e., external judges' ratings of partners were subtracted from participant ratings of their partners). It was hypothesized that men would hold stronger positive illusions about their partners' physical attractiveness than women. Results indicated that there was no significant difference in positive illusion scores for men ($M = 31.47$, $SD = 12.89$) and women ($M = 31.24$, $SD = 13.66$; $t(200) = .12$, $p = .90$, two-tailed). In other words, this analysis demonstrated that men's and women's positive illusions of partners' physical attractiveness were equally strong. That is, men's and women's assessments of their partners' physical attractiveness were equally complimentary.

Ambivalent Sexism and Positive Illusions Physical Attractiveness

The relationship between men's BS (as measured by the ASI) and men's positive illusions was investigated using a Pearson correlation coefficient. It was hypothesized that men's positive illusions would be positively correlated with men's endorsement of BS. Results indicated that there were no significant correlations between men's BS and their endorsement of positive illusions. However, there was a small, positive correlation between men's BS and men's ratings of their partners' physical attractiveness, $r = .22$, n

= 101, $p < .05$, suggesting that while men's BS does not impact their tendency to hold positive illusions, men's endorsement of BS does positively influence their general assessments of their partners' physical attractiveness.¹

In addition to this analysis, a Pearson correlation coefficient was computed between men's benevolent sexist beliefs and external judges' ratings of partners' physical attractiveness to determine whether benevolently sexist men were indeed holding positive illusions about their significant others, or if they simply tend to date more attractive women. There was a small, positive correlation between the two variables, $r = .22$, $n = 101$, $p < .05$, suggesting that benevolently sexist men do in fact tend to date more attractive women. Indeed, a partial correlation coefficient post-hoc analysis revealed that after controlling for external judges' evaluations of female participants, the correlation between men's BS and men's ratings of their partners' physical attractiveness was no longer significant, $r = .17$, $n = 101$, $p = .09$. Additionally, after controlling for women's BS beliefs, post-hoc analyses demonstrated that the correlation between men's BS beliefs and external judges' ratings of female physical attractiveness was no longer significant, $r = .11$, $n = 101$, $p = .26$, suggesting that women's endorsement of BS might be influencing external judges' ratings. Indeed, women's BS beliefs were found to be positively correlated to external judges' ratings of female physical attractiveness, $r = .24$, $n = 101$, $p < .05$. Implications of these findings will be discussed later in further detail.

Women's Body Esteem

Two separate regression analyses were conducted to assess the ability of six predictor variables (men's positive illusions, women's self-ratings, men's BS beliefs, women's BS beliefs, men's HS beliefs and women's HS beliefs) to predict two relevant

female body esteem dimensions. As previously mentioned, there are two dimensions of female body esteem that have to do with the body-as-object for women, with a third dimension dealing with physical functioning, or the body-as-process. It was anticipated that these two dimensions of female body esteem - Weight Concern and Sexual Attractiveness - would be associated with the variables analyzed here.

The first hierarchical multiple regression assessed the ability of six predictor variables (men's positive illusions, women's self-ratings, men's BS beliefs, women's BS beliefs, men's HS beliefs, and women's HS beliefs) to predict women's Sexual Attractiveness body esteem, after controlling for the influence of BMI. Men's positive illusions, women's self-ratings, and BS (men's BS and women's BS) were expected to be positively correlated with women's Sexual Attractiveness body esteem, while men's HS beliefs and women's HS beliefs were expected to be negatively correlated with women's Sexual Attractiveness body esteem. Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity. BMI was entered at Step 1, explaining 4% of the variance in Sexual Attractiveness body esteem. After entry of the remaining six predictor variables the total variance explained by the model as a whole was 32%, $F(7, 93) = 6.18, p < .001$. The six predictor variables explained an additional 28% of the variance in women's Sexual Attractiveness body esteem, after controlling for BMI, R squared change = .28, F change (6, 93) = 6.37, $p < .001$. In the final model, two variables were statistically significant: men's BS beliefs (beta = .27, $p < .05$) and women's self-ratings of attractiveness (beta = .45, $p < .001$) (see Table 1).

A second hierarchical multiple regression was used to assess the ability of six predictor variables (men's positive illusions, women's self-ratings, men's BS beliefs, women's BS beliefs, men's HS beliefs, and women's HS beliefs) to predict women's Weight Concern body esteem, after controlling for the influence of BMI. Men's positive illusions, women's self-ratings, and BS (men's BS and women's BS) were expected to be positively correlated with women's Weight Concern body esteem, while men's HS beliefs and women's HS beliefs were expected to be negatively correlated with women's Weight Concern body esteem. Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity. BMI was entered at Step 1, explaining 13% of the variance in Weight Concern body esteem. After entry of the remaining six predictor variables the total variance explained by the model as a whole was 43%, $F(7, 93) = 10.08, p < .001$. The six predictor variables explained an additional 30% of the variance in women's Weight Concern body esteem, after controlling for BMI, R^2 change = .30, F change (6, 93) = 8.15, $p < .001$. In the final model, three variables were statistically significant: women's BS beliefs (beta = .33, $p < .01$), women's HS beliefs (beta = -.26, $p < .05$), and women's self-ratings of attractiveness (beta = .49, $p < .001$). Results suggest that women's self-ratings of attractiveness and their endorsement of BS are positively correlated while their endorsement of HS is negatively correlated with their body esteem (see Table 2).

Men's Body Esteem

Two separate regression analyses were conducted to assess the ability of six predictor variables (women's positive illusions, men's self-ratings, men's BS beliefs,

women's BS beliefs, men's HS beliefs and women's HS beliefs) to predict two relevant male body esteem dimensions. As with women's body esteem, there are two dimensions of male body esteem that have to do with the body-as-object, with a third dimension dealing with physical functioning, or the body-as-process. It was anticipated that these two dimensions of male body esteem – Physical Attractiveness and Upper Body Strength - would be associated with the variables analyzed here.²

The first hierarchical multiple regression assessed the ability of predictor variables (women's positive illusions, men's self-ratings, men's BS beliefs, women's BS beliefs, men's HS beliefs, and women's HS beliefs) to predict men's Physical Attractiveness body esteem, after controlling for the influence of BMI. Women's positive illusions and men's self-ratings were expected to be positively correlated with men's Physical Attractiveness body esteem, while all measures of HS and BS (both men's and women's) were not expected to correlate with men's Physical Attractiveness body esteem. BMI was entered at Step 1, explaining less than 1% of the variance in Physical Attractiveness body esteem. After entry of the remaining six predictor variables the total variance explained by the model as a whole was 17%, $F(7, 93) = 2.77, p < .05$. The six predictor variables explained an additional 17% of the variance in men's Physical Attractiveness body esteem, after controlling for BMI, $R^2 \text{ change} = .17, F \text{ change}(6, 93) = 3.20, p < .01$. In the final model, two variables were statistically significant: women's BS beliefs (beta = .30, $p < .05$), and men's self-ratings of attractiveness (beta = .27, $p < .01$). Results suggest that men's self-ratings of attractiveness and women's endorsement of BS positively impact men's Physical Attractiveness body esteem. Indeed, a partial correlation post-hoc analysis revealed that, when controlling for external judges'

evaluations of female partner physical attractiveness, women's BS was significantly positively correlated with men's Physical Attractiveness body esteem, $r = .28$, $n = 101$, $p < .01$. Thus, as female partners' BS increased, so did male partners' body esteem on this dimension (see Table 3).

The second hierarchical multiple regression assessed the ability of six predictor variables (women's positive illusions, men's self-ratings, men's BS beliefs, women's BS beliefs, men's HS beliefs, and women's HS beliefs) to predict men's Upper Body Strength body esteem, after controlling for the influence of BMI. Again, women's positive illusions and men's self-ratings were expected to be positively correlated with men's Upper Body Strength body esteem, while all measures of HS and BS (both men's and women's) were not expected to correlate with men's Upper Body Strength body esteem. BMI was entered at Step 1, explaining 3% of the variance in Upper Body Strength body esteem. After entry of the remaining six predictor variables the total variance explained by the model as a whole was 20%, $F(7, 93) = 3.31$, $p < .01$. The six predictor variables explained an additional 17% of the variance in men's Upper Body Strength body esteem, after controlling for BMI, R^2 change = .17, F change (6, 93) = 3.32, $p < .01$. In the final model, one variable was statistically significant: men's self-ratings of attractiveness (beta = .31, $p < .01$). Results suggest that men's self-ratings of attractiveness is the only predictor of Upper Body Strength body esteem (see Table 4).

Relationship Satisfaction

A hierarchical multiple regression was used to assess the ability of five predictor variables (women's positive illusions, men's BS beliefs, men's HS beliefs, women's BS beliefs, and women's HS beliefs) to predict women's reported relationship satisfaction,

after controlling for duration of relationship. It was hypothesized that BS (men's BS and women's BS) and women's positive illusions would have a positive impact on women's reported relationship satisfaction, while hostile sexism (men's HS and women's HS) would have a negative impact. Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity. Duration of relationship was entered at Step 1, explaining less than 1% of the variance in women's relationship satisfaction. After entry of the remaining five predictor variables the total variance explained by the model as a whole was only 5%, $F(6, 94) = .92, p = .48$. Thus, the model did not significantly predict women's relationship satisfaction.

A hierarchical multiple regression was also used to assess the ability of five predictor variables (men's positive illusions, men's BS beliefs, men's HS beliefs, women's BS beliefs, and women's HS beliefs) to predict men's reported relationship satisfaction, after controlling for duration of relationship. For men, it was hypothesized that men's positive illusions would be the only variable to positively impact their reported relationship satisfaction. There were no predictions being made about the impact of BS or HS on men's relationship satisfaction because ambivalent sexism measures benevolent and hostile attitudes toward *women*, not men. Thus, it was anticipated that endorsement of BS and HS (attitudes toward women) would not have an impact on men's experiences in these relationships. Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity. Duration of relationship was entered at Step 1, explaining 1% of the variance in men's relationship satisfaction. After entry of the remaining five predictor

variables the total variance explained by the model as a whole was 14%, $F(6, 94) = 2.45$, $p < .05$. The five predictor variables explained an additional 13% of the variance in men's relationship satisfaction, after controlling for relationship duration, R squared change = .13, F change $(5, 94) = 2.72$, $p < .05$. In the final model, one variable was statistically significant: men's positive illusions (beta = .24, $p < .05$). Results suggest that men tend to be more satisfied in romantic relationships when their positive illusions regarding their female partners' physical attractiveness are strong rather than weak (see Table 5).

A paired-samples t -test was conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference in men's and women's reported relationship satisfaction within couples. Results indicated that there was no significant difference between male partners' ($M = 31.55$, $SD = 3.11$) and female partners' ($M = 31.04$, $SD = 4.49$) reported relationship satisfaction, $t(101) = 1.17$, $p = .245$.

Discussion

The current study investigated a number of hitherto unexplored relationships between young adults' benevolent and hostile sexist beliefs, their perceptions of romantic partners' physical attractiveness, and their own body esteem and romantic satisfaction. While a number of hypotheses were supported by the data, there were some unexpected findings that also warrant discussion.

Positive Illusions of Physical Attractiveness

This study was able to establish evidence in support of positive illusions of physical attractiveness. Consistent with the operational definition of positive illusions, both men and women rated their partners as significantly more attractive than external

judges rated the partners. Results further indicated that there was no significant difference between men's and women's exaggerated positive ratings of their partners' good looks. In other words, the strength of men's and women's positive illusions was equivalent. Both men and women viewed their partners in a positive light, believing them to be significantly more attractive than external observers judged them. Thus, the hypothesis that men would report stronger positive illusions than women was not supported. Instead, a potentially reassuring similarity between men and women emerged: they appear equally capable of maximizing partners' positive physical attributes and minimizing partners' negative physical qualities in order to perceive their physical selves through rose-colored lenses.

Benevolent Sexism, Positive Illusions, and Relationship Satisfaction

In the current study, men's and women's endorsement of ambivalent sexism was found to significantly influence a number of variables. First, while men's BS was not significantly correlated with their tendency to hold positive illusions about partners' physical attractiveness, men's endorsement of BS was positively correlated with their general assessments (i.e., ratings) of female partners' physical attractiveness. Analyses also revealed that men's endorsement of BS was positively correlated with external judges' ratings of female physical attractiveness, suggesting that benevolently sexist men have a tendency to date women who are judged to be more attractive.

Interestingly, however, after controlling for women's endorsement of benevolently sexist beliefs, the significant correlation between men's BS and external judges' ratings was eliminated, suggesting that women's endorsement of BS was somehow associated with external judges' ratings of female physical attractiveness. In

fact, women's BS was positively correlated with external judges' ratings. It is possible that benevolently sexist women were rated as physically attractive by external judges because these women were more likely than less benevolently sexist women to conform to society's beliefs about what it means to be feminine. In support of this possibility, previous correlational research has indicated that as women's adherence to benevolently sexist beliefs increases so does their tendency to engage in cosmetic practices associated with feminine beauty standards prior to going on romantic dates (Franzoi, 2001). The use of cosmetics allows women to artificially enlarge the appearance of their eyes and lips, narrow their eyebrows, and hide wrinkles, which decreases their perceived facial maturity, and increases their appeal to men. It is possible that external judges' positive evaluations of benevolently sexist women's physical appearance in the present study was due to the fact that these women are more likely than other women to regularly enhance their physical appearance, because they value adhering to feminine beauty standards. However, since correlation does not equal causation, it is also possible that these women have developed BS beliefs as a result of being treated a certain way for being beautiful. That is to say, through their experiences with others, these women might have learned - and internalized - benevolently sexist ideals, including the idea that women ought to be feminine and pretty. Ultimately, the correlations found in this study were small and only allow for speculation at this point.

This study did not detect significant associations between men's endorsement of ambivalent sexism (neither BS nor HS) and women's relationship satisfaction. Similarly, women's relationship satisfaction was not significantly related to positive illusions of their male partners' physical attractiveness. Results did indicate, however, that men's

positive illusions of partners' physical attractiveness were positively associated with men's relationship satisfaction. That is, the more attractive men considered their romantic partners, the happier they were in their relationships. Specifically, men's satisfaction increased as their evaluations of their partners surpassed the evaluations of external others. In other words, when the extent to which men disagreed with external judges' ratings of their partners increased (i.e., the gap widened), so did their relationship satisfaction. This was the only variable to correlate with the way men felt about their romantic relationships. Furthermore, men did not report inflated levels of relationship satisfaction. Instead, male and female partners tended to report feeling equally satisfied in their relationships.

The fact that women's positive illusions of their partners did not have the same impact as men's positive illusions about their partners on reported relationship satisfaction is perhaps not too surprising. Indeed, past research has suggested that men consider physical attractiveness to be more important in a mate than do women (e.g., Pines, 2001; Sprecher, Sullivan, & Hatfield, 1994). Thus, it is understandable that they would be more satisfied in a relationship if they evaluated their partner as more attractive than do others. Women, on the other hand, have been found to place higher value on other characteristics in a mate - characteristics besides the physical attractiveness of their partner - which explains why women's relationship satisfaction was not significantly impacted by their evaluations of their partners' physical attractiveness. It is possible, though, that variables which tend to influence women's relationship satisfaction (e.g., partners' earning potential) were not accounted for in this study and, therefore, not detected in the analyses.

As previously mentioned, there are a number of reasons why men and women hold positive illusions of partners' physical attractiveness, the primary reason seeming to involve enhancing relationship quality. For women in this study, however, this did not appear to be the case. Why, then, might women hold positive illusions of their partners, if not to increase their satisfaction within the relationship? One possibility is that holding positive illusions may allow these women to avoid experiencing doubt about whether their partner is a good match (Murray & Holmes, 1993, 1994). That is, they might strategically, and selectively, attend only to partners' positive attributes (e.g., physical appearance) as a way to curb doubts or concerns about potential flaws in their partner or the relationship. Thus, while for women, holding positive illusions may not directly increase satisfaction, it might fuel hopes for the success of the relationship (Holmes & Boon, 1990) and allow for women to stay in relationships longer to give them a chance to blossom.

Body Esteem

A number of variables were found to significantly predict women's body esteem. First, as hypothesized, results indicated that women's endorsement of BS was positively associated with their Weight Concern body esteem. Interestingly, there were no associations between men's endorsement of sexism and women's Weight Concern body esteem. Previous research has found women's BS to be positively associated with their Sexual Attractiveness body esteem (e.g., Franzoi, 2001), suggesting that women who endorse BS value adhering to societal standards for beauty and utilize resources - such as cosmetics - to enhance their sexual attractiveness and achieve the ideal. It is plausible then, that benevolently sexist women also value adhering to other cultural standards for

physical appearance (e.g., weight, size, shape) and work to enhance these aspects of their physical selves as well. Indeed, having a positive attitude toward traditional gender roles has been found to shape relationships based on traditional division of responsibilities (Johannesen-Schmidt & Eagly, 2002), and benevolently sexist women may see it as their responsibility to fulfill the female physical ideal. As a result, these women may allocate more time and resources toward achieving the female physical ideal; they may invest more time exercising and dieting to maintain slender figures. As they increasingly resemble the feminine physical ideal, these women likely feel more positively about themselves.

A relevant point to consider here is the fact that the women in this study have likely held their BS beliefs for a very long time, giving these beliefs a great deal of time to impact their Weight Concern body esteem, whereas the same cannot be said for their partners' BS beliefs. Men's BS beliefs are important for women's weight issues because they represent cultural thinness standards, but these women have, conceivably, had significantly less exposure to the beliefs of their significant others than to their own beliefs. That is, women may not have been involved with these men long enough for men's BS beliefs to impact their Weight Concern body esteem. These findings are quite different from past research which has demonstrated the impact of fathers' BS on daughters' body esteem (Oswald et al., 2012). Indeed, young women's relationships with their fathers begin at an earlier age than young women's relationships with romantic partners, and these relationships (with fathers) are, conceivably, longer in duration. This provides women with more time and exposure to the beliefs of their fathers –the very beliefs that likely helped shape women's own beliefs - than to the beliefs of their

significant others. Thus, two possibilities emerge: either 1) a significant amount of time is required for another person's beliefs to "rub off on", or influence, the way a woman feels about her body (such as time spent with a parent), or 2) beliefs of male romantic partners simply have less influence than father's beliefs have on women's body esteem, due to the significant role that parents play in women's gender socialization during critical developmental stages.

Second, as expected, women's endorsement of HS was found to be negatively associated with their Weight Concern body esteem. In previous research, HS has been found to be associated with endorsement of traditional sexism and endorsement of Western beauty standards and practices (Forbes, et al., 2007). A central facet of the traditional feminine gender role involves adhering to such beauty standards; to be attractive (Forbes et al., 2007; Mahalik et al., 2005). Women who endorse HS likely believe that to be valued in society, they must fulfill the traditional feminine beauty ideal, making physical appearance the means to acceptance and approval. Women's endorsement of HS, then, might reflect the internalization of societal demands for physical perfection, with increasing importance placed on fulfilling the ideal raising the pressure to meet these demands. While hostile sexist women endorse these standards for female physical attractiveness and believe they are important, at the same time, they may identify these standards as unattainable. Remember, HS involves negative attitudes directed toward women who embody nontraditional gender roles. So, as a hostile sexist woman recognizes her deviation from the archetype of physical perfection, it would follow that she likely directs that underlying negativity and hostility toward women toward herself as well (i.e., low body esteem).

Third, men's endorsement of benevolent sexism influenced women's body esteem on the dimension of Sexual Attractiveness, but not on the dimension of Weight Concern. This finding is consistent with past research (e.g., Oswald et al., 2012) which demonstrated that fathers' benevolently sexist beliefs were associated with daughters having more positive body esteem. However, while fathers' BS was found to have a positive association with two dimensions of female body esteem - Weight Concern and Physical Condition - the BS of men in this study (romantic partners) was found to only influence one dimension of women's body esteem: Sexual Attractiveness. Interestingly, male romantic partners' BS impacted the one female body esteem dimension that father's BS did not. That is, when men in this study endorsed BS ideology and placed their female partners on figurative pedestals, the women in these relationships tended to benefit by feeling good about their bodies, but only on a dimension comprised of physical features that are conceivably highlighted or emphasized in sexual/romantic relationships, parts related to one's sexual identity (e.g., body scent, chest/breasts, lips, sex drive, sex organs, sex activities, body hair, face). In other words, male partners' endorsement of BS was positively associated with the way women felt about physical aspects characteristic of being a woman, or being traditionally feminine. To state it plainly, it is interesting that men's BS – endorsement of traditional gender roles – impacted the way women felt about physical features that customarily exemplify society's notion of what it means to be female.

In a similar vein, women's endorsement of BS was found to positively impact men's body esteem on the dimension of Physical Attractiveness. This dimension of male body esteem is comparable to women's Sexual Attractiveness body esteem as it is also

comprised of body parts associated with being male and being perceived as attractive by the other sex (e.g., lips, buttocks, hips, feet, sex organs, face). Women's endorsements of ambivalent sexism – attitudes toward *women* - were not expected to impact the way men felt about their bodies. However, if in this case, women's BS is considered to be indicative of their tendency to adhere to cultural beauty standards and practices, then it would follow that men who date these attractive women, in turn, feel good about themselves. Indeed, a partial correlation analysis revealed that, when controlling for external judges' evaluations of female partner physical attractiveness, women's BS was significantly positively correlated with men's Physical Attractiveness body esteem. That is, as female partners' BS increased, so did male partners' body esteem on this dimension. The Physical Attractiveness body esteem dimension includes physical aspects suggestive of sexual virility; features that make men appealing to potential mates. So, it makes sense that having an attractive partner would lead men to feel more attractive or more desirable themselves.

Another important result of this study emerged during analysis of body esteem: counter to expectations, men's positive illusions about their partners' physical appearance did not impact the way women felt about their bodies. Rather, the way women felt about themselves (i.e., self-ratings of attractiveness) was the variable that had the strongest impact on their body esteem across both dimensions. Regardless of men's positive evaluations of women, women's own evaluations of their bodies seemed to be what mattered most. The same was true for men: women's positive illusions did not impact the way men felt about their bodies either. Instead, men's ratings of their own physical

attractiveness significantly predicted both Physical Attractiveness and Upper Body Strength body esteem.

Although there has been much research indicating that others' opinions about us matter in terms of how we view ourselves (e.g., Cooley, 1998; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968), the current findings suggest that - at least for young adult romantic relationships that are still mostly in their "early stages" - partners' opinions about one's physical appearance don't seem to have the sort of impact that might be hypothesized. That is, despite the vast bulk of past research that emphasizes how much others' opinions about us matter to our own self-beliefs, the current study seems to suggest a robust, ostensibly impenetrable nature of one's self-concept, specifically, self-concept pertaining to one's physical appearance. In this case, even romantic partners' positive evaluations did not have an effect. Instead, in the end, what seems to matter most is how we feel about ourselves.

Furthermore, although past research has shown that women tend to be self-critical while men tend to be self-hopeful (Franzoi et al., 2012), similarities in men's and women's social experiences are emerging (Hyde, 2005). For instance, over the past 30 years researchers have observed increasing societal pressure for men, as advertisements highlight the young, lean, muscular male physique (Grogan & Richards, 2002). There is also increasing evidence suggesting that men are as concerned about body image as women (Weltzin, Weisensel, Franczyk, Burnett, Klitz, & Bean, 2005). This study, therefore, has important implications for both men and women who struggle with body image and/or mental health issues. This work also provides support for psychotherapies treating such issues, as therapy invites an individual to make life changes by focusing on

“the self.” Indeed, one of the earliest models of psychotherapy, client-centered therapy, emphasizes helping the client develop a stronger and healthier sense of self (Rogers, 1957).

While this search into the self can be done in many ways, utilizing various techniques, one theme remains constant: intrinsic motivation is essential for change to occur (e.g., Miller & Rollnick, 2012). In other words, one’s desire for change – or willingness to change – is what sets the stage for therapeutic gains. Although social support can be beneficial (Kawachi & Berkman, 2001), the current study suggests that the optimistic views of supportive others may not necessarily have a significant influence on a person’s self-concept, or the way he/she feels about his/herself. This potentially takes the pressure off of those who are working overtime trying to help loved ones who are struggling to feel better or to see themselves or the world differently. That is, in recognizing the tenacity of a person’s self-concept, supportive others might develop new expectations for their role and support loved ones without feeling responsible for change. Now, this information might be uplifting to those who have generally positive views about themselves as it is can be comforting to know that one’s sense of self is not easily shaken. However, for those struggling with low self-esteem or a negative self-concept, this presents a challenge and offers a difficult lesson: change has to come from within. This message, while potentially disheartening, may instead be empowering as it invites one to regain control and to increase self-efficacy (Cohen, Edgar, Laizner, & Gagnon, 2006).

Limitations and Future Directions

Some of the most important scientific findings were never anticipated by researchers at the onset of their studies. Although my current findings are not going to shake the foundations of the scientific community, and although some of my hypotheses were not supported by the data, there is quite a bit here that is compelling and interesting that bears further exploration.

First, we saw evidence of positive illusions of physical attractiveness in romantic relationships, but the impact of such positive illusions was not observed as expected. That is, men's positive illusions did not significantly influence women's body esteem and the same was true vice versa. Rather, we found that what matters most, are men's and women's self-concepts; their evaluations of their own attractiveness. These results do not depict positive illusions as weak or irrelevant, but instead emphasize the strength of one's self concept, demonstrating that it cannot be easily altered by the views or evaluations of others.

Similarly, we saw that positive illusions of male partners' physical attractiveness did not impact how satisfied women were in their relationships, and neither did men's BS. In fact, none of the predictor variables examined in this study significantly accounted for women's relationship satisfaction. It may be the case that women are not detecting men's BS in their relationships; that they aren't having the experience of being placed on a figurative pedestal, despite men's BS endorsements. It is also possible that this preferential placement is not taken into consideration when women evaluate their relationships; that it doesn't sway women into feeling a certain way, neither positively nor negatively. The most likely explanation, though, is that perhaps the variables

significantly accounting for women's relationship satisfaction were absent in this study, and therefore could not be interpreted. What we did see, however, was positive illusions supporting sociocultural mate preference tendencies. That is, while positive illusions of one's partner's physical attractiveness did not significantly impact how satisfied women were in relationships, they did impact men's relationship satisfaction, as men were more satisfied when they rated their partner more positively than did others. This demonstrates the way in which physical attractiveness of a mate remains more important for men than for women.

In this study we also observed the impact of cultural sexist beliefs on body esteem. For women, we saw the significant impact of their own BS and HS beliefs on their Weight Concern body esteem, with BS increasing and HS lowering scores on this dimension. Perhaps most interestingly, though, we saw that male romantic partners' BS influenced women's body esteem on the dimension of Sexual Attractiveness, a dimension to which fathers' BS has been unrelated. This suggests that, at least for women, different significant relationships with men (i.e., parental vs. romantic) impact body esteem in different ways. This finding generates questions about the process through which cultural sexist beliefs are developed, as well as the ability of relationships with important others (besides our parents) to influence the way we feel about ourselves. For instance, when, if ever, does this process stop? Who is able to influence us (either positively or negatively), and under what circumstances? Clearly cultural beliefs are thoroughly embedded in our society, and we are exposed to them in a variety of ways, through a number of sources. But, which ones matter most? When? And why?

Within this study, we not only saw the significant impact of women's cultural sexist beliefs on their own body esteem, but on the body esteem of their male counterparts as well. Women's BS was found to positively impact men's body esteem on the dimension of Physical Attractiveness. While women's cultural sexist beliefs were not anticipated to influence men, this finding can be explained. First, if women's BS is considered to be indicative of their tendency to adhere to cultural beauty standards and practices, then it would follow that men who date these attractive women, in turn, feel good about themselves. Additionally, because the women in this study likely think and judge like past studies say women do, they likely de-emphasize men's attractiveness and emphasize men's earning potential. So, it is possible that these women have lower standards in regard to mates' physical attractiveness, or that they are simply not as critical. Being feminine women, they may also be more likely to stroke their partners' egos regarding the way they look, which would, in turn, positively influence men's body esteem. Surveying participants about the importance/desirability of certain characteristics one looks for in a mate would be helpful in further deciphering these results.

Although the current study aimed to recruit both heterosexual and homosexual couples in hopes of being able to shed light on the effects of these variables within different kinds of romantic relationships, it did not yield data on homosexual relationships. Research focusing on same-sex couples would make a large contribution to this area by expanding awareness of the effects of cultural sexism in the contexts of different types of relationships. It would be particularly interesting to survey lesbian couples to determine the effects of benevolent and hostile sexist beliefs (beliefs about gender roles, masculinity, and femininity) within this romantic relationship dynamic -

one involving two women - who likely have had considerably similar cultural experiences and have received largely overlapping messages from society. Additionally, research examining lesbian couples may identify the potential role that one's sexuality plays in mediating the impact of fathers' BS on women's body esteem. That is, does the impact of fathers' cultural sexist beliefs on daughters' body esteem differ if she identifies as heterosexual versus homosexual? The implications for women's relationship satisfaction and body esteem are important to consider and could be quite enlightening. Overall, future research should continue to examine the effects of sexism and positive illusions in romantic relationships, specifically the impact of these phenomena on the way men and women feel about each other, but, perhaps most importantly, on the way men and women feel about themselves.

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Footnotes

¹No predictions were made about HS and men's positive illusions. While HS would be expected to produce a more negative evaluation of women, the men in this study were involved in romantic relationships with the women they were evaluating, and a hostile sexist view would imply that the only thing women are good for is their beauty. Thus, men's romantic involvement with these women was believed to be a complicating factor. An analysis of the correlation between men's HS and men's positive illusions was conducted but predictions were not made regarding this factor. Results indicated there was no significant correlation between men's HS and men's positive illusions. Pearson correlation coefficients were also calculated for women's ratings of partners' physical attractiveness and their BS and HS scores; again, specific predictions were not made. There were no significant correlations between women's BS, women's HS, and women's ratings of their partners' attractiveness.

² Endorsement of BS and HS (both men's and women's) was not expected to influence men's body esteem.

Appendix A.

Informed Consent

You have been asked to participate in the following research survey. It will take approximately 40 minutes for you to complete the study. To participate in this study you need to be at least 18 years of age and currently involved in a romantic relationship. Your romantic relationship must be at least 3 months in duration and exclusive, meaning you have no other romantic or sexual partners. You will be answering questions on your attitudes and beliefs about yourself, your partner, and your romantic relationship. Your photograph will be taken, your height and weight will be measured, and you will be asked about your attitudes about different activities and social roles. Your participation is completely voluntary. By completing the study, you are giving your permission to the researcher to use your anonymous responses at professional meetings and in research publications.

All information you reveal in this study will be kept confidential. All of your data will be assigned an arbitrary code number rather than using your name or other information that could identify you as an individual. When the results of the study are published, you will not be identified by name. The data will be kept indefinitely in a password protected data file, on a password protected computer, in a locked research laboratory in the department of psychology. Your research records may be inspected by the Marquette University Institutional Review Board and (as allowable by law) state and federal agencies.

The risks associated with participation in this study include no more than you would encounter in everyday life. You can skip any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering. You can withdraw from the study at any time. The compensation associated with participation in this study includes receiving 40 minutes of extra credit for the class that you are participating in the Psychology Department Subject Pool. If you are not seeking research credit, you will be offered \$5 in compensation for your participation. This research will benefit the field of psychology by helping us better understand attitudes in romantic relationships.

Participating in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. All data that you have completed up to that point will be deleted from the study dataset.

If you have any questions about this research project, you can contact Michaela Engdahl at Michaela.Engdahl@mu.edu or Dr. Stephen Franzoi at 414-288-1650 stephen.franzoi@mu.edu. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, you can contact Marquette University's Office of Research Compliance at (414) 288-7570.

Please indicate below whether or not you agree to participate in this study.

I agree to participate in this study. I do not wish to participate in this study.

Appendix B.

Demographic Information

Please enter the 3-digit code given to you by the researcher. You MUST enter the correct code in order to receive compensation for your participation.

3 DIGIT CODE: _____

3. Gender

- Male
 Female

4. Age

years

5. Height (in inches)

(hint: 5 feet = 60 inches)

6. Weight (in pounds)

7. Race/Ethnicity

- African-American/Black/African Origin
 Asian-American/Asian Origin/Pacific Islander
 Latino-a/Hispanic
 American Indian/Alaska Native/Aboriginal Canadian
 European Origin/White
 Bi-racial/Multi-racial
 Other

8. Sexual Orientation

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | |
| Exclusively Heterosexual | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Exclusively Homosexual |

9. Duration of current romantic relationship (in months): _____

10. Do you have a current religious preference or affiliation?

YES

NO

11. If yes, what is your current religious affiliation?

12. To what extent do you agree with the following: I try hard to carry my religious beliefs over into all my other dealings in life.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

13. To what extent do you consider yourself a religious person?

Very religious

Moderately
religious

Slightly religious

Not religious at all

14. How often do you pray privately in places other than at church or synagogue?

Several
times a
day

Once a
day

A few
times a
week

Once a
week

A few
times a
month

Once a
month

Less than
once a
month

Never

15. How often do you attend religious services?

More than
once a week

Once a week

Once or
twice a
month

Every month
or so

Once or
twice a year

Never

Appendix C.

Body Esteem Scale (Franzoi & Shields, 1984)

Instructions: Below are listed a number of body parts and functions. Please read each item and indicate how you feel about this part or function of your own body, using the following scale:

- 1 = Have strong negative feelings
- 2 = Have moderate negative feelings
- 3 = Have no feeling one way or the other
- 4 = Have moderate positive feelings
- 5 = Have strong positive feelings

| | 1 Have strong negative feelings | 2 Have moderate negative feelings | 3 Have no feeling one way or the other | 4 Have moderate positive feelings | 5 Have strong positive feelings |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Body scent | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Appetite | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Nose | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Physical stamina | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Reflexes | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Lips | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Muscular strength | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Waist | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Energy level | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Thighs | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Ears | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Biceps | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Chin | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Body build | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Physical coordination | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Buttocks | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Agility | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Width of shoulders | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Arms | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|--|-----------------------|--|-----------------------|--|-----------------------|--|-----------------------|
| Chest or breasts | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> |
| Appearance of eyes | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> |
| Cheeks/cheekbones | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> |
| Hips | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> |
| Legs | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> |
| Figure or physique | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> |
| Sex drive | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> |
| Feet | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> |
| Sex organs | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> |
| Appearance of stomach | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> |
| Health | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> |
| Sex activities | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> |
| Body hair | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> |
| Physical condition | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> |
| Face | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> |
| Weight | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> |
| Sexual performance | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> |
| Eyelashes/eyebrows | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> |
| Head hair | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> |
| Skin condition | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> |
| Metabolism | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> |
| Speed | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> |
| Perspiration | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> |

Appendix D.

Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick & Fisk, 2001)

Below is a series of statements concerning men and women and their relationships in contemporary society. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement using the following scale:

- 0= disagree strongly
- 1= disagree somewhat
- 2= disagree slightly
- 3= agree slightly
- 4= agree somewhat
- 5= agree strongly

- ___ No matter how accomplished he is, a man is not truly complete as a person unless he has the love of a woman.
- ___ Many women are actually seeking special favors, such as hiring policies that favor them over men, under the guise of "equality."
- ___ In a disaster, women ought not necessarily to be rescued before men.
- ___ Most women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist.
- ___ Women are too easily offended.
- ___ People are often truly happy in life without being romantically involved with a member of the other sex.
- ___ Feminists are not seeking for women to have more power than men.
- ___ Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess.
- ___ Women should be cherished and protected by men.
- ___ Most women fail to appreciate fully all that men do for them.
- ___ Women seek to gain power by getting control over men.
- ___ Every man ought to have a woman whom he adores.
- ___ Men are complete without women.
- ___ Women exaggerate problems they have at work.
- ___ Once a woman gets a man to commit to her, she usually tries to put him on a tight leash.
- ___ When women lose to men in a fair competition, they typically complain about being discriminated against.
- ___ A good woman should be set on a pedestal by her man.
- ___ There are actually very few women who get a kick out of teasing men by seeming sexually available and then refusing male advances.
- ___ Women, compared to men, tend to have a superior moral sensibility.
- ___ Men should be willing to sacrifice their own well-being in order to provide financially for the women in their lives.
- ___ Feminists are making entirely reasonable demands of men.
- ___ Women, as compared to men, tend to have a more refined sense of culture and good taste.

Appendix E.

Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick & Fisk, 1996)

Now, thinking about your romantic relationship, answer the questions below AS
THOUGH YOU WERE YOUR PARTNER.

Please indicate the degree to which you believe YOUR PARTNER would agree or
disagree with each statement using the following scale:

- 0= disagree strongly
- 1= disagree somewhat
- 2= disagree slightly
- 3= agree slightly
- 4= agree somewhat
- 5= agree strongly

- ___ No matter how accomplished he is, a man is not truly complete as a person unless he has the love of a woman.
- ___ Many women are actually seeking special favors, such as hiring policies that favor them over men, under the guise of "equality."
- ___ In a disaster, women ought not necessarily to be rescued before men.
- ___ Most women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist.
- ___ Women are too easily offended.
- ___ People are often truly happy in life without being romantically involved with a member of the other sex.
- ___ Feminists are not seeking for women to have more power than men.
- ___ Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess.
- ___ Women should be cherished and protected by men.
- ___ Most women fail to appreciate fully all that men do for them.
- ___ Women seek to gain power by getting control over men.
- ___ Every man ought to have a woman whom he adores.
- ___ Men are complete without women.
- ___ Women exaggerate problems they have at work.
- ___ Once a woman gets a man to commit to her, she usually tries to put him on a tight leash.
- ___ When women lose to men in a fair competition, they typically complain about being discriminated against.
- ___ A good woman should be set on a pedestal by her man.
- ___ There are actually very few women who get a kick out of teasing men by seeming sexually available and then refusing male advances.
- ___ Women, compared to men, tend to have a superior moral sensibility.
- ___ Men should be willing to sacrifice their own well-being in order to provide financially for the women in their lives.
- ___ Feminists are making entirely reasonable demands of men.
- ___ Women, as compared to men, tend to have a more refined sense of culture and good taste.

Appendix F.

Physical Attractiveness measures

Please rate YOUR OWN physical attractiveness on a scale from 1 (very unattractive) to 100 (very attractive).

1 (very unattractive) ----- 100 (very attractive)

Please rate YOUR PARTNER'S physical attractiveness on a scale from 1 (very unattractive) to 100(very attractive).

1 (very unattractive) ----- 100 (very attractive)

Appendix G.

Relationship Assessment Scale (Hendrick, 1988)

Please think about your current romantic relationship as you answer the following questions:

Low (1) 2 3 4 (5) High

___ How well does your partner meet your needs?

___ In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?

___ How good is your relationship compared to most?

___ How often do you wish you hadn't gotten into this relationship?

___ To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?

___ How much do you love your partner?

___ How many problems are there in your relationship?

Table 1

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Women's Sexual Attractiveness Body Esteem (N = 101)

| Variable | Model 1 | | | Model 2 | | |
|------------------------------|----------|-------------|---------|----------|-------------|---------|
| | <i>B</i> | <i>SE B</i> | β | <i>B</i> | <i>SE B</i> | β |
| BMI | -0.52 | 0.27 | -0.19 | -0.23 | 0.26 | -0.08 |
| Partner Pos. Ill. | | | | 0.001 | 0.05 | 0.001 |
| Self-Rating | | | | 0.24 | 0.05 | 0.45*** |
| BS | | | | -0.06 | 0.09 | -0.08 |
| Partner BS | | | | 0.22 | 0.08 | 0.27** |
| HS | | | | -0.06 | 0.08 | -0.09 |
| Partner HS | | | | 0.04 | 0.08 | 0.05 |
| R^2 | | .04 | | | .32 | |
| <i>F</i> for change in R^2 | | 3.83 | | | 6.37*** | |

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 2

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Women's Weight Concern Body Esteem (N = 101)

| Variable | Model 1 | | | Model 2 | | |
|------------------------------|----------|-------------|---------|----------|-------------|---------|
| | <i>B</i> | <i>SE B</i> | β | <i>B</i> | <i>SE B</i> | β |
| BMI | -1.08 | 0.28 | -0.36 | -0.56 | 0.26 | -0.19 |
| Partner Pos. Ill. | | | | 0.01 | 0.05 | 0.01 |
| Self-Rating | | | | 0.29 | 0.05 | 0.50*** |
| BS | | | | 0.25 | 0.09 | 0.33** |
| Partner BS | | | | -0.06 | 0.08 | -0.07 |
| HS | | | | -0.20 | 0.08 | -0.26* |
| Partner HS | | | | 0.05 | 0.08 | 0.06 |
| R^2 | | .13 | | | .43 | |
| <i>F</i> for change in R^2 | | 15.13*** | | | 8.15*** | |

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 3

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Men's Physical Attractiveness Body Esteem (N = 101)

| Variable | Model 1 | | | Model 2 | | |
|------------------------------|----------|-------------|---------|----------|-------------|---------|
| | <i>B</i> | <i>SE B</i> | β | <i>B</i> | <i>SE B</i> | β |
| BMI | -0.06 | 0.15 | -0.04 | -0.01 | 0.15 | -0.004 |
| Partner Pos. Ill. | | | | 0.02 | 0.05 | 0.04 |
| Self-Rating | | | | 0.15 | 0.05 | 0.27** |
| BS | | | | -0.08 | 0.08 | -0.11 |
| Partner BS | | | | 0.20 | 0.09 | 0.30* |
| HS | | | | -0.01 | 0.08 | -0.01 |
| Partner HS | | | | 0.02 | 0.08 | 0.02 |
| R^2 | | .002 | | | .17 | |
| <i>F</i> for change in R^2 | | 0.16 | | | 3.20** | |

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

Table 4

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Men's Upper Body Strength Body Esteem (N = 101)

| Variable | Model 1 | | | Model 2 | | |
|------------------------------|----------|-------------|---------|----------|-------------|---------|
| | <i>B</i> | <i>SE B</i> | β | <i>B</i> | <i>SE B</i> | β |
| BMI | 0.23 | 0.14 | 0.17 | 0.29 | 0.14 | 0.21 |
| Partner Pos. Ill. | | | | 0.004 | 0.04 | 0.01 |
| Self-Rating | | | | 0.17 | 0.05 | 0.31** |
| BS | | | | 0.02 | 0.08 | 0.03 |
| Partner BS | | | | 0.07 | 0.08 | 0.12 |
| HS | | | | -0.06 | 0.07 | -0.08 |
| Partner HS | | | | 0.10 | 0.08 | 0.16 |
| R^2 | | .03 | | | .20 | |
| <i>F</i> for change in R^2 | | 2.85* | | | 3.32** | |

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

Table 5

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Men's Relationship Satisfaction (N = 101)

| Variable | Model 1 | | | Model 2 | | |
|------------------------------|----------|-------------|---------|----------|-------------|---------|
| | <i>B</i> | <i>SE B</i> | β | <i>B</i> | <i>SE B</i> | β |
| Rel. Dur. | -0.02 | 0.02 | -0.10 | -0.01 | 0.02 | -0.08 |
| Pos. Ill. | | | | 0.06 | 0.02 | 0.24* |
| BS | | | | 0.10 | 0.04 | 0.03 |
| Partner BS | | | | -0.05 | 0.04 | - 0.16 |
| HS | | | | -0.02 | 0.04 | -0.06 |
| Partner HS | | | | -0.03 | 0.04 | -0.11 |
| R^2 | | .01 | | | .14 | |
| <i>F</i> for change in R^2 | | 1.02 | | | 2.72* | |

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

Table 6

Benevolent Sexism, Positive Illusions, and Physical Attractiveness Ratings: Correlations and Descriptive Statistics (N=101)

| Variables | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|
| 1. Men's BS | -- | | | | |
| 2. Women's BS | .50** | -- | | | |
| 3. Men's Pos. Ill. | -.03 | -.06 | -- | | |
| 4. Judges' Ratings of Female Attractiveness | .22* | .24* | -.06 | -- | |
| 5. Men's Ratings of Partner Attractiveness | .22* | .14 | .27** | .30** | -- |
| <i>M</i> | 30 | 23.67 | 31.47 | 58.71 | 89.79 |
| <i>SD</i> | 8.65 | 9.49 | 12.89 | 13.83 | 8.81 |
| Range | 5-48 | 1-47 | 8-69 | 19-88 | 55-100 |

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.