How Do Women’s Attitudes Towards Heterosexual Men Differ By Their Sexual Orientation? A Test of Competing Hypotheses

Mary Kruk, Jes L. Matsick

Department of Psychology, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, USA; Department of Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, USA

ABSTRACT

Though feminist theory asserts that women’s sexuality influences their general relationship with heterosexual men, the leading psychological measure of women’s attitudes towards heterosexual men, the Ambivalence towards Men Inventory (AMI), has not yet accounted for sexual orientation as a meaningful difference. In this current United States-based research \((N = 318)\), we revisited the AMI to examine women’s attitudes towards heterosexual men as a function of women’s sexual orientation (i.e. lesbian, bisexual, or heterosexual). Drawing from feminist and psychological theories of attitudes towards men, we 1) tested competing hypotheses regarding whether lesbian and bisexual women or heterosexual women would be highest in hostility, and 2) hypothesised that heterosexual women would hold more benevolent attitudes than lesbian and bisexual women. When controlling for feminist identity, lesbian women held more hostile attitudes towards heterosexual men, specifically on subscales of Resentment of Paternalism and Heterosexual Hostility. However, there were no differences in benevolence towards heterosexual men between groups. We discuss hostility as a reaction to gendered oppression and the utility of benevolence in modern times. Testing the AMI with a sexually diverse sample reveals nuanced understandings of intergroup relations and demonstrates a need to establish more inclusive measures of gendered attitudes.

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‘One might try saying that a lesbian is one who, by virtue of her focus, her attention, her attachment, is disloyal to phallic reality. She is not committed to its maintenance and the maintenance of those who maintain it, and worse, her mode of disloyalty threatens its utter dissolution in the mere flick of the eye.’ – Marilyn Frye (1983, p. 171)

In The Politics of Reality, Frye describes heteropatriarchy as a stage production and uniquely positions queer women within it. Through metaphor, Frye names heterosexual men as actors who create reality and heterosexual women as hidden stagehands. For the play to continue, heterosexual men must convince heterosexual women to settle for stagehands, prioritise the actors’ needs, and avoid stepping into reality and ruin the play’s appearance. However, Frye introduces a threat to the play’s success: Frye casts lesbian women as audience members who see the stagehands and direct their attention away from the stage and onto the peripheries. In this metaphor, Frye suggests that women’s worldviews depend on their sexual orientation, such that women's sexual orientation informs their social roles and the extent to which they appease or disrupt heterosexual men (the actors) and heteropatriarchy (the play as representation of heterosexual male dominance). Lay beliefs about stereotypes associated with women’s sexual
orientations echo this sentiment (e.g. lesbian women as man-haters and heterosexual women as complicit in their oppression; Kanner & Anderson, 2010; Matsick & Conley, 2016).

In this research, we examined the notion that women’s sexual orientation contributes to their attitudes towards heterosexual men and revisit the utility of a popular measure – the Ambivalence towards Men Inventory (AMI; Glick & Fiske, 1999) – with a sexually diverse sample. We aimed to advance the largely heteronormative psychological theory on women’s attitudes towards heterosexual men by determining if and how sexual minority women differ from heterosexual women in their perceptions of heterosexual men.

Theorising about attitudes towards men from a psychological perspective

The leading psychological framework for theorising attitudes towards heterosexual men relies on an ambivalence model. Glick and Fiske (1999) posited that women’s position in a patriarchal society shapes their hostility and benevolence towards heterosexual men. They suggested that resentment of heterosexual men’s unearned privilege and power creates hostility towards men among women, whereas dependence on heterosexual men (e.g. financially, romantically), admiration of heterosexual men’s higher status, and heterosexual affection towards men creates women’s benevolence towards men. The combination of overtly negative (i.e. hostile) and seemingly positive, but condescending (i.e. benevolent) attitudes captures both the multiple and complex ways women feel about heterosexual men and women’s position in a patriarchal society in which they are both helped and harmed by men. This unique aspect of the AMI positions the measure a widely-cited and leading feminist, psychological framework for capturing women’s attitudes towards men (Glick & Fiske, 1999; Glick et al., 2004).

Glick and Fiske (1999) define hostility towards men as resentment of heterosexual men’s greater status and measure it with three subscales: Compensatory Gender Differentiation (e.g. ‘Men act like babies when they are sick’), Heterosexual Hostility (e.g. ‘Men usually try to dominate conversations when talking to women’), and Resentment of Paternalism (e.g. ‘Men will always fight to have greater control in society over women’). Hostility towards heterosexual men reflects a consciousness of gender discrimination and an assertion that women have unique strengths that heterosexual men lack (e.g. psychological strength). The consequences of hostility towards heterosexual men on societal gender inequality are inconsistent, but hostility is largely found to be unrelated to women contributing to gender inequality through their beliefs or actions. For example, women’s hostility towards heterosexual men does not cause them to be more or less discriminatory based on sex (i.e. sexist) towards other women and men (Chapleau et al., 2007, 2008).

Benevolence towards men is the expressed desire to protect heterosexual men, and is measured in three subscales (Glick & Fiske, 1999): Maternalism (e.g. ‘Even if both members of a couple work, the woman ought to be more attentive to taking care of her man at home’), Complementary Gender Differentiation (e.g. ‘Men are less likely to fall apart in emergencies than women are’), and Heterosexual Intimacy (e.g. ‘Women are incomplete without men’). Benevolence reflects traditional gender roles that women are both subordinate to and caretakers of heterosexual men and demonstrates a condescending belief that men cannot care for themselves. These ‘positive’ attitudes towards heterosexual men reinforce traditional gender roles (restricting men to roles that lack nurturance, warmth, and independence) akin to benevolence towards women (Glick & Fiske, 1996). As such, women’s benevolence towards heterosexual men is not benign and can present harmful consequences; for example, benevolence positively correlates with acceptance of female and male rape myths and sexism (e.g. victims are to blame for their assaults; Chapleau et al., 2007, 2008; Kanner & Anderson, 2010).

Sexual orientation as an individual difference factor of women’s attitudes

In this study, we examined sexual minority women’s attitudes towards heterosexual men to address the generalisability of the AMI. Although ‘sexual minority’ encompasses many identities (e.g. queer, asexual), we focused on lesbian and bisexual/pansexual women for ease of recruitment and
between-group comparison. Given this framework has been primarily used with heterosexual women or women with an unspecified sexuality, there is scant empirical evidence to draw upon to predict how women’s attitudes towards heterosexual men (as measured by benevolence and hostility) vary by sexual orientation. We thus generated hypotheses based on theoretical notions posited by social psychological research and canonical feminist text.

**Hostility**

There are competing theoretical rationales as to whether heterosexual women or sexual minority women would be higher in hostility towards heterosexual men. On one hand, Glick and Fiske (1999) hypothesised that ‘traditional’ women would score the highest in benevolence and hostility towards men on the AMI because of their dependence on heterosexual men (i.e. benevolence) and resentment of their dependence on men (i.e. hostility). Research demonstrates that sexual minority women are often nontraditional, transgressors of gender roles, and as less traditional than heterosexual women (Anderson, 2020; Kwok et al., 2020; Massey, 2010; Matsick & Conley, 2016). It is thus plausible that traditionalism among women parallels the continuum of sexual orientation to some extent, such that lesbian and bisexual women tend to be less traditional than heterosexual women. According to Glick and Fiske's (1999) reasoning, then, heterosexual women would thus hold more hostility than lesbian and bisexual women. Though not all heterosexual women uphold traditionalism, research would suggest that heterosexual women are more traditional than lesbian and bisexual women on average (Anderson, 2020; Kwok et al., 2020; Massey, 2010; Matsick & Conley, 2016). As a result, when Glick and Fiske (1999) refer to ‘traditional’ women, we infer they implied the heterosexuality of women. This seems probable given the AMI revolves around assumed heterosexuality (e.g. ‘heterosexual intimacy’), and reporting of women’s sexual orientations in the original sample and subsequent studies is omitted (Chapleau et al., 2007, 2008; Glick & Fiske, 1999).

In addition to heterosexual women being more hostile because they are more traditional than bisexual and lesbian women (i.e. Glick & Fiske’s hypothesis), heterosexual women may be more hostile towards heterosexual men because of their dependency on men for romantic partners. That is, heterosexual women may have more ‘complaints’ towards men (e.g. reactions to infidelity; Lego, 1999), whereas men may be irrelevant or neutral in lesbian and bisexual women’s romantic lives (Kanner & Anderson, 2010). Even when bisexual women experience sexual/romantic relationships with men, they may not feel as constrained to men as partners in the same way that heterosexual women may be (e.g. bisexual women feel more pressure to conform to traditional gender roles when romantically partnered with men than with women; Kwok et al., 2020). We thus built from previous psychological research to generate our first hypothesis (H1a): Heterosexual women would be higher in hostility than lesbian women, given Glick and Fiske’s (1999) theoretical rationale about traditionalism, previous research suggesting heterosexual women are more traditional than sexual minority women, and heterosexual women’s romantic proximity to heterosexual men.

On the other hand, multiple writings in feminist theory suggest sexual minority women hold more hostility towards men than heterosexual women. From Radicalesbians (1972) foundational ‘The Woman-Identified Woman,’ to Rich’s writing on lesbian existence (Rich, 1980), to the rebellion of feminist queer women in second-wave feminism (e.g. Podmore & Tremblay, 2015), radical lesbian feminist theory demonstrates a rich history of sexual minority women’s resistance of heteropatriarchy. In light of feminist theory and activism, sexual minority women’s lives provide a site for their resistance – echoing Smith’s (1987) assertion that individuals’ worldviews are borne from lived experiences. Sexual minority women’s resistance of heteropatriarchy emerges in both the personal aspects of their lives (e.g. being less likely to internalise feminine beauty norms and being less rigid to traditional gender roles in attitudes and behaviours; Bergeron & Senn, 1998; Eves, 2004), and the public aspects of their lives (e.g. liberal political allegiances, experiences of violence). Reasonably, this long history of criticising heteropatriarchy implies that sexual minority women hold high levels of hostility towards heterosexual men. We thus identified a competing hypothesis (H1b): We proposed
that lesbian and bisexual women would hold more hostility than heterosexual women because they have a more radical history of resisting heteropatriarchy.

**Benevolence**
Contrary to our review on hostility, there appears to be consensus in theory: heterosexual women would hold more benevolence towards heterosexual men than sexual minority women. Beyond Glick and Fiske’s (1999) hypothesis that heterosexual women hold benevolence because of their traditionalism and dependency on men, heterosexual women may be more benevolent than lesbian women because heterosexual men are their primary romantic partners. This romantic dependence possibly yields a desire to care for men. Benevolence also reflects stereotypical heterosexual domestic arrangements between women and men (e.g. women as caretakers) that may mirror some heterosexual women’s lives already. Likewise, benevolence may be self-serving for some heterosexual women, such that endorsing complementary gender roles (through benevolent attitudes) can justify the distinct gendered roles of some women’s overall romantic relationships with men. Lesbian women – and possibly bisexual women – may feel less benevolence because they are less likely to care for men in domestic settings. Overall, we expect bisexual women’s patterns of attitudes towards men to be more similar to lesbian women’s than heterosexual women’s because both bisexual and lesbian women contend with heterosexist violence, male sexualisation of their sexuality, heterosexual men’s sexual prejudice, and marginalisation in multiple identity categories (e.g. Diamond, 2005; Herek, 2009; Herek & McLemore, 2013; Jackson & Gilbertson, 2009) and therefore may have less desire to protect men. We thus formulated hypothesis 2 (H2): Heterosexual women would hold more benevolence than lesbian and bisexual women.

**Feminist identity and women’s attitudes towards men**
Feminists are stereotyped as ‘man haters’ (Anderson et al., 2009), demonstrating a lay understanding that feminist identity contributes to women’s attitudes towards men. The few studies on feminists’ attitudes towards men indeed show a relationship between feminist identity and attitudes towards men, though counter-stereotypic: feminists tend to be lower or not different in hostile attitudes towards men compared to non-feminists (Anderson et al., 2009; Iazzo, 1983). Due to this previous research (though limited) demonstrating that feminist identity is indeed influential in women’s attitudes towards men, we include feminist identity as a control variable in determining the effect of sexual orientation on attitudes towards men. We also recognise sexual orientation as a key aspect of women’s individual, interpersonal, and political selves, therefore, we control for feminist identity to isolate our central variable of interest (i.e. women’s sexual orientation).

**Current research**
We aimed to advance the psychological study of women’s attitudes towards men by examining the (largely ignored) role of sexual orientation in women’s attitudes towards heterosexual men. Because feminist identity relates to attitudes towards men (e.g. Anderson et al., 2009), we controlled for the effects of feminist identity. We tested competing hypotheses for hostility: heterosexual women would hold more hostility (H1a) or less hostility (H1b) than lesbian and bisexual women. For benevolent attitudes, we proposed that heterosexual women would hold more benevolence than lesbian and bisexual women (H2).

**Method**

**Participants**
We received exempt approval from the Institutional Review Board. We recruited United States participants through online advertisements (e.g. craigslist.com) to take a 10-minute online survey.
We employed a convenience sampling method. Prior to analysis, we removed ten participants who were not women, two who indicated that they did not provide honest responses (i.e. responded ‘Yes’ when asked if they provided joking responses), and four who did not identify as lesbian, bisexual/pansexual, or heterosexual.

The final sample included 318 women. Fifty-five percent of participants were heterosexual, 23% bisexual or pansexual (included in the same response option), and 22% lesbian. The average age was 25.55 years old (SD = 10.50), and 61% of participants were undergraduate students. Seventy-six percent identified as White, 7% as Black, 6% as multiracial, 6% as Latina, 3% as Asian, 1% as Native American, 1% as Middle Eastern, and 1% did not answer.

**Design and procedure**

Participants had to be at least 18 years old and identify as lesbian, bisexual/pansexual, or heterosexual to participate. Eligible participants who provided informed consent responded to measures of attitudes towards men and feminist identification. We counterbalanced the presentation of the measures in Qualtrics survey software. At the end of the study, participants completed a demographic questionnaire (e.g. age, ethnicity). More information can be found in the Online Supplemental Material.

**Ambivalence towards men**

Participants responded to the 20 items of the AMI (Glick & Fiske, 1999). This measure includes two scales: Benevolence (10 items; Total α = .83, 95% CI [.80, .85]; Heterosexual women α = .84, 95% CI [.80, .87]; Bisexual women α = .85, 95% CI [.79, .89]; Lesbian women α = .74, 95% CI [.64, .82]) and Hostility (10 items; Total α = .87, 95% CI [.85, .89]; Heterosexual women α = .84, 95% CI [.80, .87]; Bisexual women α = .92, 95% CI [.88, .94]; Lesbian women α = .86, 95% CI [.81, .91]). Subscales of benevolence included: Maternalism (3 items; Total α = .67, 95% CI [.60, .73]; Heterosexual women α = .66, 95% CI [.56, .74]; Bisexual women α = .73, 95% CI [.60, .82]; Lesbian women α = .66, 95% CI [.49, .78]), Complementary Gender Differentiation (3 items; Total α = .73, 95% CI [.68, .78]; Heterosexual women α = .78, 95% CI [.71, .83]; Bisexual women α = .71, 95% CI [.56, .81]; Lesbian women α = .65, 95% CI [.48, .77]), and Heterosexual Intimacy (4 items; Total α = .73; 95% CI [.67, .77]; Heterosexual women α = .74, 95% CI [.67, .80]; Bisexual women α = .78, 95% CI [.69, .86]; Lesbian women α = .57, 95% CI [.39, .72]).

Subscales of hostility included: Resentment of Paternalism (3 items; Total α = .71, 95% CI [.65, .76]; Heterosexual women α = .65, 95% CI [.54, .73]; Bisexual women α = .81, 95% CI [.71, .87]; Lesbian women α = .71, 95% CI [.57, .81]), Compensatory Gender Differentiation (3 items; Total α = .74, 95% CI [.68, .78]; Heterosexual women α = .67, 95% CI [.57, .74]; Bisexual women α = .82, 95% CI [.73, .88]; Lesbian women α = .74, 95% CI [.62, .83]) and Heterosexual Hostility (4 items; Total α = .79, 95% CI [.75, .83]; Heterosexual women α = .69, 95% CI [.61, .76]; Bisexual women α = .84, 95% CI [.78, .90]; Lesbian women α = .82, 95% CI [.74, .88]). In general, the Cronbach’s alphas coefficients on the AMI indicate reasonable reliability; however, there were some low Cronbach’s alphas when analysed by sexual orientation (a point we return to later in the Discussion).

We specified heterosexual in the items to ensure participants were reporting their attitudes towards heterosexual men and not sexual minority men. Participants indicated their agreement with items on a 6-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 6 = strongly agree), and the items were averaged to create subscale scores. Greater numbers on each subscale indicated greater endorsement of benevolence and hostility towards men.

**Feminist identity**

As a continuous measure of feminist identity, we used Rudman and Fairchild’s (2007) Feminist Identity Index (3 items; α = .92; 95% CI = .90, .93; e.g. ‘I consider myself to be a feminist’). Cronbach’s
alpha by sexual orientation included: bisexual women $\alpha = .91$ (95% CI = .86, .94), lesbian women $\alpha = .93$ (95% CI = .89, .95), and heterosexual women $\alpha = .90$ (95% CI = .87, .92). Participants indicated their agreement with the statements on a 6-point scale ($1 = \text{strongly disagree}; 6 = \text{strongly agree}$), and we averaged the items to create scores. Greater numbers reflected stronger feminist identity.

**Results**

We conducted two preliminary analyses in SPSS. First, we determined that benevolence and hostility towards men were correlated, $r(316) = .49$, $p < .001$. Second, we examined feminist identity as a function of women’s sexual orientation, and found a significant difference, $F(2, 315) = 17.63$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .10$: Compared to bisexual ($M = 4.76$, $SD = 1.20$) and lesbian women ($M = 4.92$, $SD = 1.35$), heterosexual women ($M = 3.99$, $SD = 1.26$) scored significantly lower on feminist identity ($p$ values < .001). Given these results, we controlled for feminist identity in all analyses to assess whether women’s sexual orientation predicted attitudes towards men beyond the influence of feminist identity.

We conducted an ANCOVA in SPSS software (version 26) with sexual orientation as the 3-level factor and feminist identity as the covariate. We then performed post-hoc pairwise comparisons applying a Bonferroni adjustment. The Bonferroni adjustment is useful when testing multiple comparisons simultaneously, as it lowers the alpha value and avoids spurious significant results. See (Table 1) for means and standard deviations and (Table 2) for descriptive statistics and correlations.

**Hostility**

We found a significant difference in hostility towards men based on sexual orientation, $F(2, 314) = 9.32$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$. Lesbian women held greater hostility towards men than heterosexual women, $p < .001$. There was no significant difference between bisexual and heterosexual women ($p = .32$), or between bisexual and lesbian women ($p = .05$). In contrast to Hypothesis 1a, Hypothesis 1b was partially supported: Lesbian women, not heterosexual women, were higher in hostility towards men, though bisexual women did not significantly differ from either group.

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<th>Table 1. Means (SE) of hostility and benevolence towards men by women’s sexual orientation, controlling for feminist identity.</th>
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<td>Hostility towards men</td>
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<td>Resentment of paternalism</td>
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<td>Compensatory gender differentiation</td>
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<td>Heterosexual hostility</td>
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<td>Benevolence towards men</td>
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<td>Maternalism</td>
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<td>Complementary gender differentiation</td>
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<td>Heterosexual intimacy</td>
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Different superscripts indicate a significant difference between groups at $p < .05$.

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<th>Table 2. Descriptive statistics and correlations.</th>
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<td>Mean (SD)</td>
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<td>1. Hostility towards men</td>
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<td>2. Benevolence towards men</td>
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<td>3. Feminist identity</td>
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<td>4. Sexual orientation</td>
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Hostility, benevolence, and feminist identity had response options ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Coefficient $a$ is reported in parentheses along the diagonal of the correlation matrix. $^a p < .05$, $^** p < .01$, $^*** p < .001$
An analysis of subscales revealed that the groups differed in Resentment of Paternalism \( F(2, 314) = 6.23, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .04 \) and Heterosexual Hostility \( F(2, 314) = 14.14, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .08 \). Lesbian women held more Resentment of Paternalism than both heterosexual \( p < .01 \) and bisexual women \( p = .02 \). Lesbian women also held more Heterosexual Hostility than both heterosexual \( p < .001 \) and bisexual women \( p = .04 \). Groups did not differ in Compensatory Gender Differentiation, \( F(2, 314) = 2.57, p = .08, \eta_p^2 = .02 \).

### Benevolence

The effect of women’s sexual orientation on benevolence towards men was nonsignificant, \( F(2, 314) = 1.06, p = .35, \eta_p^2 = .01 \); thus, we did not find support for H2. Contrary to theoretical and historical reasoning, heterosexual women were not higher in benevolence towards men than lesbian or bisexual women. There were no significant differences between groups in Maternalism, \( F(2, 314) = 1.42, p = .24, \eta_p^2 = .01 \), Complementary Gender Differentiation, \( F(2, 314) = 0.15, p = .87, \eta_p^2 = .001 \), or Heterosexual Intimacy, \( F(2, 314) = 1.69, p = .19, \eta_p^2 = .01 \).

### Discussion

We found mixed support as to whether women’s attitudes towards heterosexual men differed by sexual orientation despite long-held social beliefs and feminist psychological theorising about sexual minority women’s negative feelings about men. We recognised that sexual minority women, in light of their experiences in heteropatriarchy, may have different attitudes towards heterosexual men than heterosexual women do. When controlling for feminist identity (due to significant variation by sexual orientation), lesbian women were more hostile compared to heterosexual women but did not differ from bisexual women (H1a and H1b). Contrary to the second hypothesis, heterosexual women were not more benevolent than lesbian and bisexual women (H2).

Lesbian women’s higher hostility was driven by two subscales: Heterosexual Hostility and Resentment of Paternalism. Both constructs reflect an acknowledgement of sexist oppression rather than hostility towards heterosexual men’s personalities (i.e. Compensatory Gender Differentiation; Glick & Fiske, 1999). Despite lesbian women exhibiting greater hostility via the AML, we surmise that these attitudes have more to do with resistance of sexist oppression and less to do with the stereotype that they ‘hate’ individual heterosexual men. It is crucial to contextualise what is meant by ‘hostility,’ as women holding negative attitudes towards gendered oppression is expected and, to some extent, productive for activism. That is, because collective rage towards inequities can motivate people to challenge injustices, lesbian women’s hostility towards heterosexual men may contribute to the fight for gender equality (Van Zomeren et al., 2011). Casting sexual minority women’s hostility towards oppression as ‘man hating’ can negatively impact social justice outcomes, such as deterring heterosexual people from participating in liberation efforts led by sexual minority women (e.g. Zucker, 2004). We thus encourage researchers to problematise and think critically about the language afforded by the AML. ‘Hostility’ could carelessly be interpreted as confirmation of the lesbian-as-man-hater stereotype and heterosexual women’s comparative affinity for men, but we argue that lesbian women’s hostility reflects their reality in heteropatriarchy which contributes to their standpoint. As suggested by their role as audience members in Frye’s (1983) play, our data with the AML indicate that lesbian women indeed hold worldviews that decentre men and challenge the patriarchal reality of the show.

Future research on women’s gendered attitudes will benefit from embracing sexually diverse samples. First, bisexual women are a fascinating group to study, as they occupy a unique position of potentially having both female and male partners, which could influence their attitudes and well-being (e.g. Dyar et al., 2014). In our study, bisexual women scored similarly in hostility to heterosexual women, and similarly in benevolence to both lesbian and heterosexual women. These differences may be due to unexplored demographic factors like partner gender and relationship history. That is,
perhaps bisexual women currently partnered with men score similarly to heterosexual women. Studying bisexual women may reveal that partner gender can be equally as important to sexual orientation in women’s attitudes towards men. Second, though we focused on heterosexual men as a target group, future research could extend this work by examining women’s attitudes towards sexually diverse men (e.g. gay men). We aimed to capture dynamics between women and a more high status group (i.e. heterosexual men); however, examining attitudes between two groups with similar marginalisation (e.g. lesiban women’s attitudes towards gay men) can elucidate gendered dynamics within sexual minority communities (e.g. Matsick & Rubin, 2018) and identify the potential for stigma-based solidarity across heterosexual women and gay men (see Craig & Richeson, 2016).

Finally, we turn to the implications for benevolence as a construct. Regardless of sexual orientation, women tended to disagree with benevolent attitudes mandating that women care for men above themselves. On average, each group of women scored below the midpoint for benevolence towards men, suggesting a floor effect (a pronounced pattern of low scoring responses) and perhaps signifying benevolence (as currently measured) is somewhat obsolete. For example, some items measured agreement with strict gender roles that are, today, extreme views that may only exist among highly traditional/conservative women (e.g. women should care for men regardless of their own careers). The low coefficient alphas by sexual orientation on certain subscales also raise concerns about the applicability and generalisability of this measure. For example, the overall coefficient alpha on Heterosexual Intimacy was .73 (a lower, yet acceptable alpha), but when broken down by sexual orientation, lesbian women had a concerningly low coefficient alpha of .57. As our data show, certain sexual orientation groups (particularly lesbian women) contribute to a reduced coefficient alpha. Therefore, research that collapses across sexual orientation on the AMI may achieve an alpha at an acceptable rate without accounting for the nuance of sexual orientation. We thus cannot recommend this measure be used with sexual minority women and recognise this research as a cautionary tale. Including widely used gender measures without precedent of their validation with sexually diverse samples can create challenges in the interpretation of the data.

Nevertheless, our observations of these data are encouraging – A measure about gendered attitudes from two decades ago may be nearing its expiration because of shifting societal attitudes about gender roles and our recognition that women’s different social locations may produce different attitudinal content. We suspect that the benevolence subscale of the AMI may no longer be suitable, particularly with a sexually diverse sample. Though beyond the scope of the current paper, it would be a worthwhile and exciting endeavour to reassess and revalidate the AMI with a sexually diverse sample and to consider what could be revised or added to best reflect sexual minority women’s attitudes.

**Conclusion**

In this research, we examined women’s attitudes towards men as a function of their sexual orientation. As theorised by feminist scholars for decades, sexual minority women and heterosexual women inhabit different social locations that cultivate unique experiences and vantage points. We posited that differing social locations would yield different attitudes towards men as measured by the most widely used psychological instrument to assess perceptions of men. Whereas lesbian women held greater hostility towards men than heterosexual or bisexual women, the groups did not differ in benevolence towards men. Our study expands the research of women’s attitudes towards men to explicitly include sexual minority women, critically examines what hostility towards men implies, and suggests the need of a modern measure of benevolence towards men. We hope this research inspires the future of feminist psychology in its efforts to establish more nuanced and inclusive measures of gendered attitudes and experiences.
Note

1. Consistent with Zucker (2004), we also asked participants to indicate whether they considered themselves to be feminists by selecting ‘yes’ or ‘no’. Sixty-five percent of women identified as feminist and 36% did not (percentages rounded). We then included three items by Zucker (2004) to assess cardinal beliefs of feminists; however, these items did not evidence strong reliability in a scale (α < .60). We preferred our measure to focus on identity rather than beliefs; therefore, we decided to use Rudman and Fairchild’s Feminist Identity Index (Rudman & Fairchild, 2007).

Disclosure of potential conflicts of interest

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Notes on contributors

Mary Kruk, M.S., is a Ph.D. candidate in Psychology and Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at The Pennsylvania State University (Penn State). Mary received her B.A. in Women’s Studies from University of Michigan where she worked as research assistant and laboratory manager in Dr. Terri Conley’s Stigmatized Sexualities Laboratory. Her research programme focuses on the experiences of people with stigmatised identities, with an emphasis on women and sexual minorities. She is interested in minority/majority intergroup relations; in particular, some of her work examines minority groups’ attitudes towards high status majority groups (e.g., White men). She also conducts research on how minority groups navigate their social and physical environments vigilant to informational cues about safety and threat. Much of her research has implications for understanding the social well-being and psychological health of people with stigmatised identities. In 2020, she became a Translational Science Fellow and her research was supported by the National Institutes of Health, and she has been recognised with the Laura Richardson Whitaker Award for her scholarly excellence in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.

Jes L. Matsick, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor of Psychology and Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (WGSS) at The Pennsylvania State University (Penn State). She received her Ph.D. in Psychology and Women’s Studies from the University of Michigan. She works at the intersection of sexuality studies, gender psychology, and prejudice research. Influenced by feminist standpoint theory, her work prioritises LGBTQ+ individuals’ experiences to understand contemporary intergroup dynamics. She uses social psychological and feminist theories to examine social issues, such as sexual prejudice and social disparities. She directs the Underrepresented Perspectives Lab at Penn State, in which she trains students to conduct feminist psychological research. She serves as a mentor to Ph.D. candidates in Penn State’s dual-degree Ph.D. programme in Psychology and WGSS. Since 2010, she has published 30 scientific papers and book chapters, and her research has been funded by the American Institute of Bisexuality, the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association, the National Science Foundation, the American Psychological Association, and the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues. She is a two-time fellow of the Feminist Institute for Academic Psychologists, and most recently she received Penn State’s Academic Achievement Award for her research, teaching, and service to LGBTQ+ communities.

ORCID

Mary Kruk http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3537-0362
Jes L. Matsick http://orcid.org/0000-0003-4368-3211

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