

Emotional Responses to Gender-Based Inequality: Justifications and Consequences

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EMOTIONAL RESPONSES TO GENDER-BASED INEQUALITY:
JUSTIFICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

by

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ABSTRACT
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Marquette University, 2011

This paper examines the interaction between exposure to gender inequality and commonly-held sexist beliefs and effects on participants' emotional reactions and behavioral intentions to address that inequality. Male and female participants were exposed to gender disparities where women are disadvantaged or to a control condition and then primed with hostile or benevolent sexism. No difference existed in men's reports of guilt in response to gender inequality if offered a benevolently sexist justification. Women were more likely than men to report moral outrage, although the difference was larger when participants also considered female disadvantage. When reminded of both gender inequality and benevolent sexism, participants reported more program support than when exposed to benevolent sexism alone. Hostile sexism did not lead to changes in intended program support, regardless of exposure to inequality. Moral outrage was positively correlated with support for female-targeted programs, while guilt was not. This research clarifies the role that sexist justifications have in maintaining gender inequality by showing that benevolent sexism reduces male guilt and male and female support for programs promoting gender equality while hostile sexism does not. It also indicates that other-focused moral outrage is a stronger motivator to action than self-focused guilt.

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Emotional Responses to Gender-Based Inequality: Justifications and Consequences

Gender inequality continues to exist in a variety of forms throughout the world (Peterson & Runyan, 1993). Wood & Eagly (2002) noted that gender inequality is usually exhibited in the form of patriarchy, or a social structure in which men are entitled to more assets, power, and privilege than women. Not only are women deprived of both financial and leadership opportunities in the work force when compared to men, even when controlling for type of job and qualifications (Jacobs, 1995), but they are also more likely than men to fall below the poverty line (Hoynes, Page, & Stevens, 2006) and are more likely to be victimized through sexual assault and domestic abuse (Heise & Garcia-Moreno, 2002; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2006). As such, gender inequality produces many deficits in women's everyday lives that put them at a relative disadvantage to men. Given the pervasive gender inequality that exists world-wide, as well as in the United States, it is clear that increased understanding of factors that may contribute to the maintenance and, conversely, the abatement of gender inequality is necessary in the pursuit of social justice.

It seems natural to expect that individuals' reactions will vary when exposed to the disparity that exists between men's and women's experiences. Researchers have found that individuals confronted with group-based inequality experience emotional distress in several forms, the most frequently studied including collective guilt and moral outrage (Boeckmann & Feather, 2007; Branscombe, Doosje, & McGarty, 2002; Harvey & Oswald, 2000; Schmitt et al., 2000; Schmitt et al., 2004; Schmitt et al., 2008). To date, however, little evidence has been presented in support of a causal relationship between types of beliefs that influence men's and women's reactions when faced with gender

inequality. The goal of the current study is to build on previous research on emotional reactions experienced by individuals when confronted with gender inequality and the behavioral consequences resulting from these emotional reactions. We also examined whether hostile or benevolently sexist stereotypes about women serve as justifications of inequality.

Reactions to Social Inequality

Two possible reactions to perception of group-based inequality include collective guilt and moral outrage. Collective guilt refers to negative feelings of distress experienced by members of a privileged group when they become aware that members of their ingroup have imposed harm and wrongdoing on members of a disadvantaged group (Branscombe, Doosje, & McGarty, 2002). An ingroup refers to a particular social group with which an individual feels a shared connection, membership, or devotion (Allport, 1954). A key feature of collective guilt that distinguishes it from typical feelings of guilt is that it need not result from an action personally committed by the individual experiencing that guilt (Doosje et al., 1998). Instead, it results from the knowledge that the broader social group to which one belongs benefits from unfair advantage that consequently places others at a relative disadvantage. Moral outrage, on the other hand, describes different feelings of distress over injustice or inequality. Montada and Schneider (1989) describe the difference by proposing that, rather than being a self-accusation, moral outrage is a feeling of anger or reprimand toward others for their responsibility in perceived injustice. In other words, the difference between the two concepts lies in the fact that collective guilt appears to be ‘self-focused’ (even if there is no actual blame directed towards the self for personal wrongdoing, there can be blame

directed towards the self purely for one's membership in a privileged group), while moral outrage is 'other-focused.' This differential focus could potentially impact behavioral responses to awareness of inequality.

The majority of the research on collective guilt has centered on racial prejudice – in particular, collective guilt experienced by Whites when considering their own unearned privileges and past harms committed against Blacks (Harvey & Oswald, 2000; Powell, Branscombe, & Schmitt, 2005; Swim & Miller, 1999). The idea of collective guilt and its relationship to support for programs that reduce injustice and inequality has evolved primarily from the work of Shelby Steele (1990). Steele argued that “White guilt” is a particular type of guilt that some Whites feel after acknowledging both that they are members of a group that receives unearned advantages and also that they have either participated in or been indifferent, unwilling, or even unable to do anything to minimize the subordination of minority groups. For example, White individuals who reported feelings of collective guilt were also more likely to acknowledge the existence of White privilege and the actuality of discrimination against Blacks (Swim & Miller, 1999). Similarly, white participants who watched a video containing footage of a Civil Rights protest in which Black children were brutally attacked by both dogs and police reported feeling collective guilt (Harvey & Oswald, 2000). This previous research suggests that collective guilt and moral outrage, at least sometimes, occur upon awareness of social inequities (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Boeckman & Feather, 2007; Harvey & Oswald, 2000; Schmitt et al., 2000; Swim & Miller, 1999; Wakslak et al., 2007).

It is important to understand how these emotional responses may result in behavioral actions, such as working to create equality or other reparatory measures. Harvey and Oswald (2000) found that White participants' collective guilt predicted support for Black targeted programs on campus. In contrast, Wakslak et al. (2007) examined the relationships between endorsement of system-justifying ideology, existential guilt and moral outrage, and support for programs promoting the redistribution of resources to aid the disadvantaged and found that moral outrage, not existential guilt, correlated with resource reapportionment. Wakslak and colleagues suggested that moral outrage influences individuals' support for programs that promote social equality because moral outrage (as discussed above) is an other-focused emotion (see also Iyer, Leach & Crosby, 2003). By leaving out the role of the self in maintaining group-based inequality, the emphasis remains on the plight of the disadvantaged, which garners support for programs that serve to reduce intergroup-inequality. In contrast, the self-focus of feelings of guilt might involve retracting from the desire to reach out to help others because the focus is placed on reducing the personal distress associated with uncomfortable emotions.

Preliminary research has also found that men report collective guilt in regard to gender inequality (Boeckmann & Feather, 2007; Schmitt et al., 2000; Schmitt et al., 2004; Schmitt et al., 2008). Using survey methodology, Schmitt et al. (2000) asked male participants if they felt guilty for women's disadvantaged and unfair position. They found that guilt was the best predictor of men's expressed intentions to do what they could to make the situation between men and women more equal. In an experimental study, Schmitt et al. (2008) induced awareness of relative privilege in male participants and then gave them an opportunity to help women by collecting signatures on a petition.

The experimenters manipulated the difficulty of the opportunity to repair inequality by asking participants to collect 5, 50, or 100 signatures. Men who were asked to collect 50 signatures were significantly more likely to report feelings of collective guilt than those who were asked to collect either 5 signatures or 100 signatures. The findings suggest that if the reparatory act is perceived as too difficult, the self's role in repairing inequality feels out of reach in proportion to one's guilt, which may provide a justification for inaction. Likewise, if the reparatory act is perceived as too easy, perhaps the inequality does not seem to be a worthy problem that needs to be addressed. While this research provides support for the argument that negative emotional responses to inequality do occur in some men when confronted with inequality, to date there has been no research that considers women's reactions to gender inequality.

System Justification Theory

One might wonder why, despite distressing emotional reactions experienced in the face of gender inequality, this inequality continues to exist to the extent that it does in societies around the world. System justification theory offers a possible explanation for this puzzling phenomenon (Jost & Banaji, 1994). The theory suggests that individuals engage in a "process by which existing social arrangements are legitimized, even at the expense of personal and group interest" (p. 2). The rationale for this type of behavior is that the maintenance (or justification) of the societal status quo is necessary in order for the individual to view his or her world as just (Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004).

Endorsement of legitimizing ideologies may serve to minimize negative emotional reactions to inequality and ultimately justify the status quo. Such justifying beliefs might include the belief that the world is fair and that, as such, women's status

relative to men is reasonable when taking into account commonly-held gender stereotypes. Wakslak et al. (2007) found that high-system-justification is associated with less negative affect and less moral outrage in regards to economic inequality than is low-system-justification. However, only other-focused moral outrage mediated the influence of system justification on support for resource redistribution. Individuals who were exposed to system justification showed diminished levels of negative affect and moral outrage. Participants who endorsed moral outrage, thus placing focus outward on the disadvantaged group, were more willing to help by indicating support for resource reapportionment. If the distressing emotions were aimed inward (as occurs with guilt), participants were not as likely to support the creation of programs to help the disadvantaged. These findings suggest that, in the case of gender inequality, disparity may continue because acknowledging that the social structure is not equitable can have psychological disadvantages for the individual, such as anxiety and/or discomfort (see Jost & Hunyday, 2003).

In regard to gender inequality, commonly held sexist stereotypes may serve as justifications for the persistence of these inequalities (Glick & Fiske, 2001). While sexism has previously been understood primarily as hostile disparaging of members of a certain gender, researchers have begun to understand that it has, in fact, two very different but related facets. Glick and Fiske (1996) introduced these two facets under the fitting labels of *hostile sexism* and *benevolent sexism*. Hostile sexism is perhaps the more salient of the two. It derives from Allport's (1954) classic components of prejudice as "an aversive or hostile attitude toward a person who belongs to a group, simply because he belongs to that group, and is therefore presumed to have the objectionable qualities

ascribed to the group” (Allport, 1954, p. 7). In contrast, benevolent sexism refers to stereotypical views of women’s characteristics and roles. Benevolent sexism appears to encompass a variety of “traditional” views of women, with men as the protective providers and women as reliant on them for support. In this way, these traditional views may serve to justify the current system in which women are at a relative disadvantage when compared to men. Glick et al. (2000) found that hostile and benevolent sexism are correlated in the range of .40 to .50 in both men and women residing in the United States. This suggests that they tap into related aspects of the concept of sexism. It is interesting to note that both men and women tend to endorse both hostile sexism and benevolent sexism (a phenomenon that is true across a variety of countries throughout the world), with women typically endorsing less hostile sexism than men but similar amounts of benevolent sexism.

While benevolent sexism may appear harmless, it has been shown to have a variety of ill effects for women. World-wide endorsement of both hostile sexism and benevolent sexism predict inequality (Glick et al., 2000). Reports of both hostile and benevolent sexism are negatively correlated to national evaluations of gender equality, as measured by indices assessing both women’s occupation of high-status jobs as well as women’s relative achievement with respect to level of education, income, and life expectancy, indicated by the Gender-related Development Index put forth by the United Nations (see United Nations, 1995). These findings suggest that it is the combination of seeing women as incompetent and unjustly “taking” opportunities from men (hostile sexism) but also in need of particular care and consideration from men (benevolent sexism) that potentially contributes to maintaining gender inequality in today’s society.

In endorsing hostile and benevolent sexism, men may be able to diminish potentially distressing emotional reactions, such as collective guilt, that could cause anxiety or discomfort. At the same time, women, believing they need this particular care and consideration as a result of their gender, may experience less outrage at their unjust position in society.

While these relationships are correlational in nature and thus cannot imply causality, researchers have also been able to explore causal relationships between gender stereotypes and the system-justification processes. Jost and Kay (2005) exposed male and female participants to hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, a combination of both hostile and benevolent sexism, a non-stereotypical control, or to a true “nothing” control. Participants were then asked to indicate their agreement with gender-specific system-justifying ideology. They found that women who were exposed to benevolent stereotypes were higher in system justification than women exposed to non-stereotypical traits. Hostile stereotypes and non-stereotypical trait exposure did not affect women’s justification of the current social system. Thus, when women are reminded of subjectively positive yet stereotypical traits often associated with their gender group, they are more likely to justify the current American system. It appears as if the subjectively positive valence of benevolent sexism and other complementary stereotypes leads women to see these “feminine” traits or qualities as good or beneficial, prompting them to justify the system and support the status quo. Men’s exposure to stereotypes of any kind was unrelated to reports of system justification. However, men’s endorsement of gender-specific system justification was higher overall than was women’s, suggesting that men

are already endorsing gender-specific system justification of inequality and do not need to be reminded of sexism in order to do so.

Current Study

In sum, this research suggests that, when reminded of gender-based inequality, men report distressing emotional reactions (Boeckmann & Feather, 2007; Schmitt et al., 2000; Schmitt et al., 2004; Schmitt et al., 2008). To date, no research has examined women's emotional reactions to gender-based inequality. However, it seems likely that women will respond with more moral outrage than do men because it is their group that is disadvantaged. In the current study we seek to examine both men's and women's reactions to gender based inequality.

Furthermore, based on previous research, we propose that hostile and benevolent sexism should serve to justify inequality and thus reduce negative emotional reactions to gender-based inequality, although this effect should differ for men and women. Finally, because the literature is mixed in terms of the difference between self-focused guilt and other-focused outrage in their ability to predict support for programs to help the disadvantaged, we seek to examine how these emotions differentially predict support for programs to reduce inequality.

The current study randomly assigned both male and female participants to be exposed to either gender inequality or a control condition (no mention of gender inequality), followed by exposure to a justification for this inequality (either hostile sexism or benevolent sexism). Participants then completed measures of collective guilt and moral outrage as well as a measure designed to assess willingness to support female-targeted programs.

It is hypothesized that men who are exposed to gender inequality will be more likely than men who were not exposed to gender inequality to report collective guilt, moral outrage, and to support programs that promote gender equality. However, sexist justification should eliminate negative emotional reactions in men. Specifically, men who are exposed to gender inequality and then offered either hostile or benevolent sexist beliefs will report less collective guilt, moral outrage, and support for female-targeted programs than if they were just exposed to gender inequality alone.

For women, exposure to inequality should have a different impact on emotional distress. Research (e.g., Miron, Branscombe, & Schmitt, 2006) indicates that women will not experience collective guilt, since the inequality exposure used in this study does not portray their gender group as having unearned privileges that put another group at a disadvantage. It is hypothesized that women who are confronted with gender inequality will experience moral outrage. Sexist justifications will minimize these emotions only when the justifications are benevolent. We predict that women will still experience moral outrage if exposed to hostile sexism. Thus, while both hostile and benevolent sexist beliefs should justify inequality for men and reduce their emotional reactions of guilt and outrage, only benevolent sexism will function to justify gender inequality among women.

Finally, we seek to examine how emotional reactions are associated with perceptions of importance to fund organizations that promote gender equality. We hypothesize that moral outrage, but not collective guilt, will be correlated with support for programs to promote gender equality.

Method

Participants

Two hundred and forty-four college students from a mid-sized private Midwestern university participated in this study for partial course credit. Forty-seven percent of the participants were male ($n = 115$), while 53% were female ($n = 129$). Fifty-seven percent of the participants were freshmen in college ($n = 138$), 25% were sophomores ($n = 62$), 8% were juniors ($n = 22$), and 9% were seniors ($n = 22$). Eighty-six percent of the participants reported that they identify as Caucasian American ($n = 209$), followed by 8% as Latino/Latina ($n = 19$), 4% as African American ($n = 11$), 3% as Asian American ($n = 8$), 3% as citizens from another country ($n = 6$), 2% as Biracial ($n = 4$), and less than 1% as other ($n = 2$). Participants ranged from 18- to 39-years-old, with a median age of 19 years.

Of these 244 participants, 7 were removed from the analyses after indicating in the believability check that they understood the nature of the relationship between the three aspects of the study. A total of 237 participants remained.

Procedure and Measures

Initial procedures. Upon entering the research lab where data collection took place, an undergraduate research assistant obtained informed consent from all participants. Participants were then given a cover story explaining that their participation would include a series of three short and unrelated studies that are compiled into one to make them more time efficient and to, therefore, maximize their extra credit. They were told that the main goal of the study was to look at the emotional development of college students; however, because of the short length of that study, they will also be asked first

to provide feedback on surveys being piloted for another study (this will be the gender inequality and justification prime conditions) and then also to fill out a funding survey put out by the university's financial planning committee that asks for their opinion on the reallocation of funds among various campus programs.

Perceived Social Inequity Scale–Women's Form (PSIS–W) prime. To manipulate awareness of gender-based inequality, half of the participants were asked to proofread parts of Corning's (2000) Perceived Social Inequity Scale–Women's Form and the other half were asked to preview a filler survey that did not mention gender. Specifically, those in the inequality prime condition were exposed to comments that juxtapose women's and men's experiences in a number of different areas where women consistently have the worse outcome. For example, for the three following topics, participants were exposed to two subitems each: "To what extent do women alter their career plans to accommodate child-raising," and "To what extent do men alter their career plans to accommodate child-raising," or "To what extent do men take precautions to guard themselves against sexual assault," and "To what extent do women take precautions to guard themselves against sexual assault," or "To what extent are women affected by the way women are portrayed on TV or in magazines," and "To what extent are men affected by the way men are portrayed on TV or in magazines?"

The goal of the current research was to determine whether or not priming awareness of inequality would influence the way participants react to gender inequality. Therefore, the participants were asked only to proofread the items, rather than to endorse them. Jost & Kay (2005) found that mere exposure to commonly held gender stereotypes is enough to increase support for a system of inequality. If the participants were asked to

agree or disagree with the items, they may go through the process of consciously and explicitly disagreeing with them, which has the potential to reduce the effect of the exposure. Instead, instructions guided the participants to read the items given to them and to indicate whether or not they felt that each item was ambiguously worded. They were given the option of rating each item on a scale ranging from 0 (*not worded clearly at all*) to 5 (*worded perfectly clearly*).

Ambivalent Sexism Inventory prime. The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory was used to manipulate the priming of sex-based stereotypes. One half of the participants read the items that compose the hostile sexism subscale (e.g., “Most women fail to appreciate fully all that men do for them,” and “Many women get a kick out of teasing men by seeming sexually available and then refusing male advances”), while the other half of the participants read the items that compose the benevolent sexism subscale (e.g., “Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess,” “Men should be willing to sacrifice their own well-being in order to provide financially for the women in their lives,” and “In a disaster, women should be rescued before men”). Instructions guided the participants to read the items given to them and to indicate whether or not they felt that each item was clearly worded. They were given the option of rating each item on a scale ranging from 0 (*not worded clearly at all*) to 5 (*worded perfectly clearly*).

Self-report measures. Following the above gender inequality and sexism primes, all participants completed a number of self-report measures that followed one another as separate, computerized questionnaires in the private rooms of the research lab.

Personal Feelings Questionnaire–2 (PFQ–2). Harder & Zalma (1990) revised the Harder Personal Feelings Questionnaire (Harder & Lewis, 1987) to form a scale

composed of 10 items that make up a Shame subscale and 6 items that make up a Guilt subscale. While the scale was originally intended to measure more general, “trait” experiences of these emotions, it was altered for the purposes of this study to a “state” measurement of shame and guilt. This method has been used in previous research (see Harvey & Oswald, 2000) and has the goal of obtaining information about participants’ present emotional state. In this case, only the Guilt subscale was included. Participants were asked to respond to the items on a 7-point scale ranging from 0 (*no feeling*) to 7 (*high feeling*) in regard to the degree to which he or she was *currently* experiencing the particular affect. The Guilt subscales possess good psychometric properties with the current sample ($\alpha = .87$).

Moral outrage measure. Participants completed the moral outrage scale developed by Wakslak et al. (2007). The scale assessed their feelings of anger and distress over injustice and inequality (e.g., “I feel really angry when I learn about people who are suffering from injustice”). Participants rated each item on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (*disagree strongly*) to 6 (*agree strongly*). This scale maintains good psychometric properties, with an internal consistency of Cronbach’s alpha of .84.

Demographics. Participants completed several questions related to demographics, including age, sex, year in college, race/ethnicity, and yearly family income. This questionnaire was given toward the end of the study in order to control for effects that could result from reminding individuals of their gender before asking them to fill out measures in which gender issues are discussed.

Support for programs to reduce gender inequality. Once participants finished completing the self-report and demographic questionnaires, they were asked to complete

a paper survey said to be put out by the university's financial planning committee. The research assistant explained that, due to economic concerns, funding was being reallocated among various campus programs and that the committee was interested in polling students to determine their opinions about how this money should be dispersed. The research assistant assured participants that little additional time would be required, since the survey only consists of 13 items, which should take less than 5 minutes to complete. The questionnaire used was adapted from Harvey & Oswald's (2000) questionnaire measuring students' support for Black programs. Students were asked to rate the importance of giving university funding to four programs promoting gender equality: Women in Business, Women in Academia, Society for Female Undergraduates, and Empowerment (a feminist group on campus). These organizations were placed among nine additional unrelated programs. Participants were asked to rate their beliefs about the importance of giving funding to each of these organizations on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*very important*) to 7 (*very unimportant*). Consistency of the subscale of the female targeted programs was computed with lower scores indicating greater importance to fund (Cronbach's $\alpha = .83$).

Believability check. Last, participants were asked to answer an open-ended question on paper asking them to explain in their own words what they believed the study to be about. Participants who correctly guessed the relatedness of the three portions of the study were excluded from the analyses, as being aware of the study's aims could potentially influence responding. Finally, participants were debriefed as to the true nature of the study and thanked for their participation.

Results

A factorial ANOVA was conducted to explore the impact of sex, exposure to inequality, and exposure to sexist justification on collective guilt, as measured by the Guilt subscale of Harder's PFQ-2. The results indicated that there was not a significant main effect for sex ($F(1, 229) = .94, p = .33$). The main effects for inequality prime ($F(1, 229) = .14, p = .71$), and sexist justification exposure ($F(1, 229) = .005, p = .94$) were not significant.

None of the two-way interactions were significant; however, there was a significant three-way interaction between sex, inequality exposure, and justification exposure, $F(1, 229) = 3.97, p = .048, \eta^2 = .02$. Simple effects tests for men who were exposed to hostile sexism indicated that men exposed to gender inequality ($M = 2.47, SD = 1.69$) reported more guilt than those who were not exposed to gender inequality ($M = 1.75, SD = .90$), $F(1, 229) = 4.25, p < .05$, Figure 1a. For men exposed to benevolent sexism, no significant difference existed based on exposure to gender inequality ($M_{\text{inequality prime}} = 2.00, SD = .88, M_{\text{no inequality prime}} = 2.29, SD = 1.45, F(1, 229) = .73, p > .10$). For women exposed to hostile sexism, no significant differences in reports of guilt existed between groups based on inequality exposure ($M_{\text{inequality prime}} = 1.87, SD = .1.30, M_{\text{no inequality prime}} = 2.12, SD = 1.34, F(1, 229) = .59, p > .10$, Figure 1b). Similarly, for women exposed to benevolent sexism, no significant differences in reports of guilt existed between groups based on inequality exposure ($M_{\text{inequality prime}} = 1.97, SD = 1.35, M_{\text{no inequality prime}} = 1.90, SD = 1.18, F(1, 229) = .05, p > .10$).

For moral outrage, the factorial ANOVA results indicated that there was a significant main effect of sex, $F(1, 229) = 13.02, p < .001, \eta^2 = .05$, suggesting that men

($M = 4.21$, $SD = .81$) reported less moral outrage than did women ($M = 4.59$, $SD = .76$). Main effects of inequality exposure and justification exposure were not significant ($F(1, 229) = .01$, $p = .92$ and $F(1, 229) = .05$, $p = .82$, respectively).

The main effect of sex was moderated by a marginally significant interaction with inequality prime exposure, $F(1, 229) = 2.83$, $p = .09$, $\eta^2 = .01$, see Figure 3. A simple effect test comparing men and women who were not exposed to gender inequality was significant ($F(1, 229) = 6.47$, $p < .05$), suggesting that women not exposed to gender inequality ($M = 4.51$, $SD = .73$) reported more moral outrage than did men not exposed to gender inequality ($M = 4.20$, $SD = .79$), see Figure 2. When exposed to gender inequality, men's reports of moral outrage ($M = 4.11$, $SD = .85$) were still significantly less than women's moral outrage ($M = 4.65$, $SD = .76$); however, the difference between men and women was larger in this condition ($F(1, 229) = 21.06$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_{inequality\ prime} = .10$, $\eta^2_{no\ inequality\ prime} = .04$). Neither the interaction between gender and justification exposure, $F(1, 229) = .63$, $p = .43$, nor the interaction between inequality exposure and justification exposure, $F(1, 229) = .12$, $p = .73$, were significant. The three-way interaction also was not significant, $F(1, 229) = .25$, $p = .52$.

For support for campus programs supporting gender equality, the main effect for gender was significant, $F(1, 226) = 19.13$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .08$). Men ($M = 4.14$, $SD = 1.28$) were less likely to support programs promoting gender equality than were women ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 1.16$). Main effects for inequality exposure and justification exposure were not significant, $F(1, 226) = .52$, $p = .47$ and $F(1, 226) = .13$, $p = .72$, respectively. There was a marginally significant interaction between exposure to inequality and exposure to justification, $F(1, 226) = 3.16$, $p = .07$, $\eta^2 = .01$. A simple effects test comparing

inequality exposure condition to the no inequality exposure condition, for those also exposed to benevolent sexism, was significant, $F(1, 226) = 4.00, p < .05$, Figure 3. Those exposed to an inequality prime before being exposed to benevolent sexism ($M = 3.58, SD = 1.21$) showed greater support for programs promoting gender equality than did those not exposed to an inequality prime prior to being exposed to benevolent sexism ($M = 4.02, SD = 1.35$). A simple effects test comparing inequality exposure condition to the no inequality exposure condition, for those also exposed to hostile sexism, was not significant, $M_{\text{inequality prime}} = 3.84, SD = 1.67, M_{\text{no inequality prime}} = 3.68, SD = 1.33, F(1, 226) = .46, p > .10$.

Finally we examined the associations between emotional reactions and support for programs promoting gender equality. A hierarchical multiple regression was used to assess the capacity for guilt, moral outrage, gender, the interaction between guilt and gender, and the interaction between moral outrage and gender to predict support for programs promoting gender equality. Guilt and moral outrage were mean centered and two-way interaction terms were computed with gender. In the first block, gender, guilt, and moral outrage were included as predictors. The model was statistically significant ($F(3, 230) = 11.56, p < .001; R^2 = .13$). Specifically, moral outrage ($\beta = -.23, p < .001$) and gender ($\beta = -.23, p < .001$) were negatively associated with program support, while guilt ($\beta = -.07, p = .24$) was not significantly associated with program support. Program support was measured with lower numbers reflecting greater support. Thus, greater moral outrage was associated with more support for programs to reduce gender inequality, as was being female. In the second block, the two-way interactions did not significantly contribute to predicting program support ($F_{\text{change}}(5, 228) = .81, p = .45; R^2$

change = .006), suggesting that there was not a meaningful interaction between participant gender and the type of emotional reaction experienced in their ability to predict support for programs promoting gender equality.

Discussion

These findings offer mixed support for the study's hypotheses and, in doing so, contribute interesting insight into research on emotional responses to gender inequality. As expected, women report less guilt compared to men when confronted with gender inequality. As the underprivileged group, it would be unusual for women to experience guilt for their role in maintaining gender inequality, as is seen in men and members of other privileged groups (Harvey & Oswald, 2000; Powell, Branscombe, & Schmitt, 2005; Swim & Miller, 1999). On the other hand, results suggest that men do experience guilt but only under certain circumstances.

The experimental design used in this study allows us to examine the causal impact of hostile and benevolent sexist ideologies on emotional reactions and behavioral intentions in response to gender inequality. For men, it appears as though hostile sexism did not justify gender inequality and reduce guilt, as was hypothesized. Because hostile sexism is blatant and overt (Glick & Fiske, 1996), it may be that today's college-age men find it unacceptable. Instead of offering justification, hearing openly hostile remarks directed toward women *after* men are reminded of existing gender inequality appears to have solidified their guilt reaction. However, without the gender inequality prime, hostile sexism alone does not appear to be enough to prompt men to feel guilty.

In contrast, men who were exposed to benevolent sexism did not differ in their guilt reaction regardless of whether or not they were exposed to gender inequality. This

suggests that benevolent sexism does function to justify gender inequality as suggested by Glick and Fiske (2001). Benevolent sexism, perhaps because of its seemingly positive (yet stereotypical) view of women, may allow men to justify the existing unequal status of women. In other words, benevolent sexism seems to prompt men to think that these inequalities exist because of qualities that women as a group are believed to possess, such as superior moral sensibility or the need for protection by and support from men. Thus, the current system is justified as the inequality exists for a reason. The existing status quo makes sense. Why feel guilty about it?

When faced with the gender inequality prime, women also report more moral outrage than do men. In addition, exposure to gender inequality results in greater polarization between women's and men's reports of moral outrage than occurred without such exposure. Perhaps confronting women with gender inequality reinforces their feelings of moral outrage by forcing them to consider their relative disadvantage, while confronting men with gender inequality leads to feelings of defensiveness or feeling the need to protect the self. In doing so, it may be that men's expressions of outrage at social injustice are reduced. Moral outrage is conceptualized as anger or reprimand directed toward another for his or her role in creating or maintaining injustice (Montada and Schneider, 1989). When confronted with depictions of gender inequality in which women are disadvantaged, men may consider their own role in maintaining an unjust system. In discussing his theory of emotional intensity, Brehm (1999) proposes that emotions function to promote arousal, the purpose of which is to respond in some way to the situation that created the emotion, whether through action or inaction. The dissonance created by being a subject of their own outrage might serve as a deterrent to experiencing

moral outrage at gender inequality. Thus, perhaps men experience less outrage to protect themselves from the dissonance that this creates.

Interestingly, contrary to hypotheses, neither hostile sexism nor benevolent sexism influenced participants' expressions of moral outrage. Perhaps this discrepancy is related to how we operationally defined the variables. While guilt was measured as a current emotional experience not related to any cause, moral outrage was measured as an emotional response to social inequality, specifically. It may be that students already had preexisting attitudes about inequality, and the sexism justifications did not override those attitudes.

In addition to feeling more moral outrage, women were also more likely than men to support programs aimed at reducing gender inequality. Given the adverse effects of gender inequality for women (Heise & Garcia-Moreno, 2002; Hoynes, Page, & Stevens, 2006; Jacobs, 1995; Tjaden & Theonnes, 2006), it is not surprising that women are more invested than men in taking action to correct it.

Participants who were exposed to benevolent sexism and the gender inequality prime reported more support for female-targeted programs than did those exposed to benevolent sexism without also being exposed to gender inequality. However, for participants exposed to hostile sexism, support for gender-specific programs was unchanged by previous exposure to inequality. Perhaps exposure to benevolent sexism without an initial reminder about women's unfair advantage prompted only subjectively positive feelings about women's current status. Thus, people did not feel a need to support programs designed to reduce gender inequality. This is consistent with Jost and Kay's (2005) finding that women reminded of subjectively positive yet stereotypical

traits associated with their gender group are more likely to endorse system-justifying ideology than are women exposed to hostile sexism. Interestingly, the current sample contained both men and women, suggesting that this process occurs for members of both sexes. This suggests that women may not always be inspired to work toward equality if they are in an environment where they are reminded of benevolently sexist beliefs.

In examining the types of emotional reactions that are associated with the likelihood that an individual will take action to reduce gender inequality, we found that moral outrage, not guilt, predicted support for female targeted campus programs. These results are consistent with research suggesting that emotion focused on the plight of others is a stronger motivating affective reaction than is self-focused affect (Iyer et al., 2003; Wakslak et al., 2007). Like moral outrage, guilt is an emotion to which most people respond with attempts to reduce its unpleasantness. However, unlike moral outrage, in which one focuses his or her attention on the victims of social inequality, collective guilt implies that the individual must think of oneself and one's own role in the maintenance of transgression (Branscombe et al., 2002). Thus, it appears as though it would be more advantageous for action taken to reduce inequality to focus on awareness of the unjust circumstances of a disadvantaged group, rather than on the role that members of the advantaged group have in maintaining it.

This study is also novel in its ability to shed light on women's emotional reactions to gender inequality. Women appear to experience significantly more moral outrage, in general, than do men. They also appear to experience more of this outrage after being exposed to gender inequality. It is possible that one reason that women seemed to endorse higher levels of outrage, even in the no inequality group, is because

these women (though not exposed to the gender inequality prime) were still exposed to either hostile or benevolent sexism. The higher levels of moral outrage than expected in the group of women not exposed to gender inequality may have to do with exposure to sexism, itself, especially hostile sexism.

This study has potential limitations that deserve mention. First, because participants were collected from a subject pool of undergraduate psychology students at a private, mid-sized, Midwestern university, findings may not be generalizable more broadly to other populations (e.g., non-student sample or different age cohorts). It seems possible that young adults may respond differently to exposure to gender inequality because they have not (for the most part) been required to maintain the responsibilities of adulthood within a society that is potentially biased against (or, depending on group membership, in favor) of them. A second potential limitation may be found within the actual technique chosen as the inequality prime. Although much of the research regarding men's emotional responses to gender inequality has used somewhat similar exposure mediums (e.g., Schmitt et al., 2008), it seems reasonable to think that some people may be less likely to respond emotionally to a prime that is delivered in written form. Perhaps priming gender inequality through a different medium, such as video, may influence the strength of the emotional response or behavioral intention.

Several areas of future research are apparent. This study suggests that it is the disadvantaged group that may be most inspired to carry out action to reduce the inequality that places them at this disadvantage. Future research should be sure to include the disadvantaged group when exploring motivating emotional reactions to inequality. It would also be interesting to examine other widespread ideological

viewpoints that may justify social inequality, such as just world beliefs, meritocracy, or right-wing authoritarianism. Further insight into men's and women's emotional and behavioral responses to gender inequality may shed light on why women continue to be at a relative disadvantage compared to men across many domains. The findings also have the potential to be generalized to other instances of group-based inequality. Existing social disparities based on racial or ethnic group membership, sexual orientation, age, education, or socioeconomic standing also may be maintained, in part, by commonly-held beliefs that serve as justifications for why the status quo exists as it does, the most dangerous of which might be inconspicuously masked in a positive tone.

In conclusion, this study is the first to experimentally examine how both men and women respond to gender-based inequality. We find partial support for the idea that sexist ideologies can serve to justify the inequalities. We also strengthen evidence for the conclusion that moral outrage is a stronger motivating emotion than is guilt. The implications of this new area of research have the potential to be far reaching. By understanding people's reactions to social inequalities and the familiar ideological viewpoints that influence these reactions, we can start to determine the best method for reducing them. The direction provided here is that we ought to focus on moral outrage and widespread ideological views that, though often invisible, keep people believing that unjust systems are legitimate in their current form.

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Table 1
Means and Standard Deviations of the Variables for Male and Female Participants

Method	Male		Female		All	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
PFQ-2 Guilt	2.13	1.26	1.97	1.29	2.04	1.27
Moral Outrage	4.21	.81	4.59	.76	4.41	.80
SPPGE	4.14	1.28	3.44	1.16	3.77	1.27

Note. For the PFQ-2 Guilt scale and the Moral Outrage scale, higher scores are indicative of more extreme responding in the direction of the construct assessed. For the SPPGE scale, lower scores reflect greater support.

Table 2
Pearson Correlation Matrix among Scores on the PFQ-2 Guilt Subscale, Moral Outrage Scale, and the Scale Measuring Support for Programs Promoting Gender Equality (SPPGE)

Method	1	2	3
1. PFQ-2 Guilt	--	-.03	-.05
2. Moral Outrage		--	-.28***
3. SPPGE			--

Note. For the PFQ-2 Guilt scale and the Moral Outrage scale, higher scores are indicative of more extreme responding in the direction of the construct assessed. For the SPPGE scale, lower scores reflect greater support. Thus, higher reports of moral outrage are associated with greater support for programs that reduce gender inequality.

*** $p < .001$

Figure 1a. Men's reports of guilt based on inequality and justification exposure condition. A significant difference was found in levels of reported guilt for men exposed to hostile sexism. For men exposed to benevolent sexism, the difference based on inequality exposure condition was not significant.

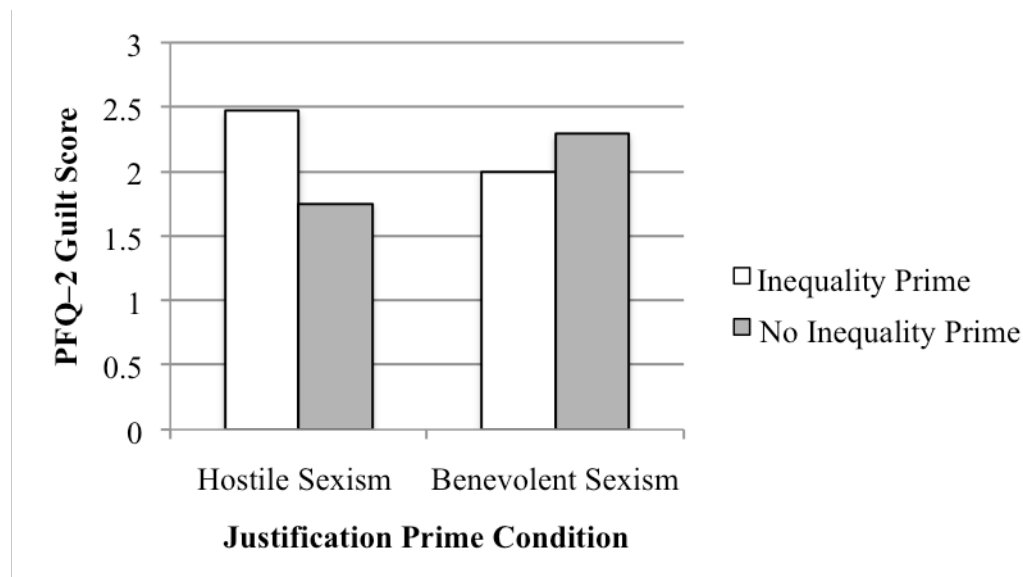


Figure 1b. Women's reports of guilt based on inequality and justification exposure condition. No differences in levels of guilt were found regardless of inequality prime and justification prime conditions.

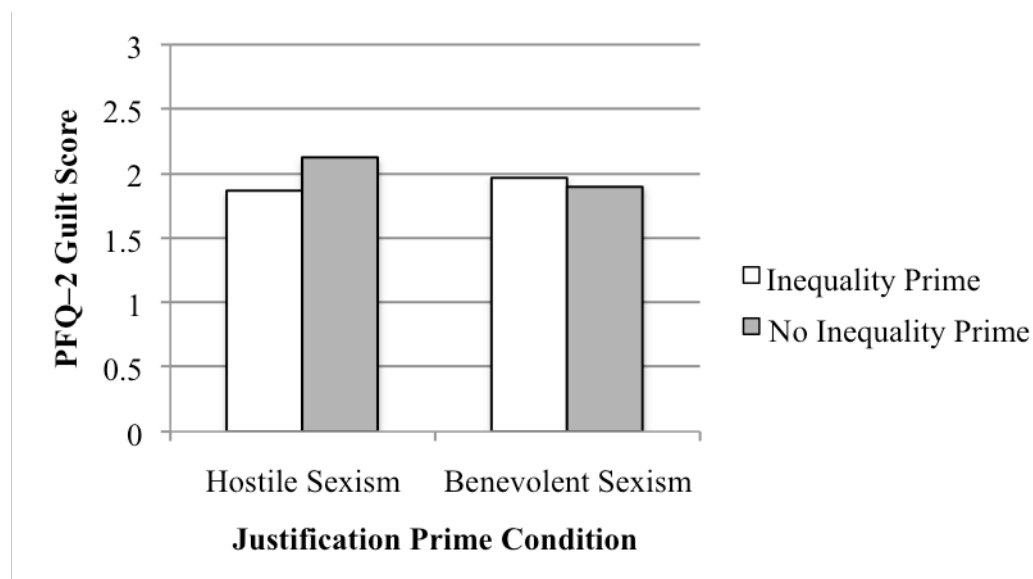


Figure 2. Participant's reports of moral outrage based on inequality exposure condition.

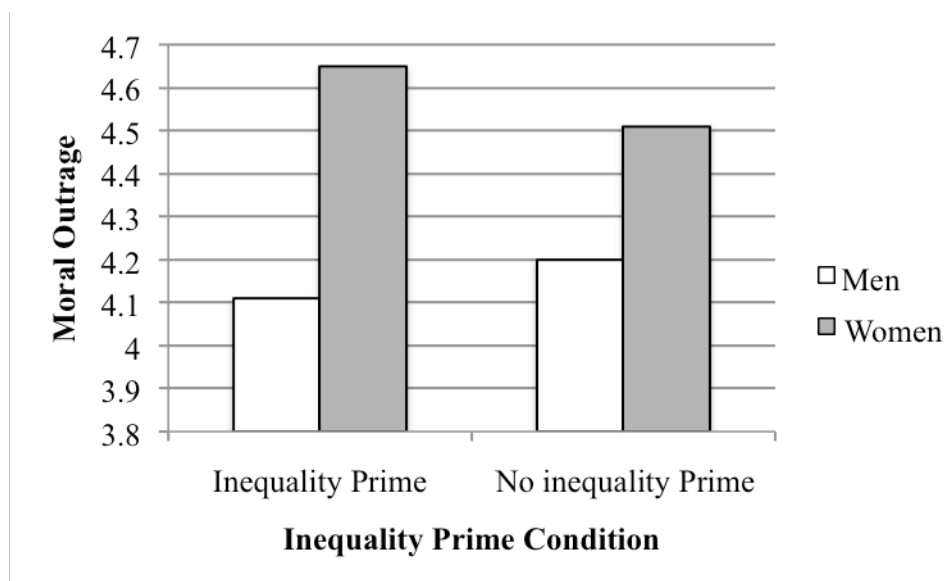
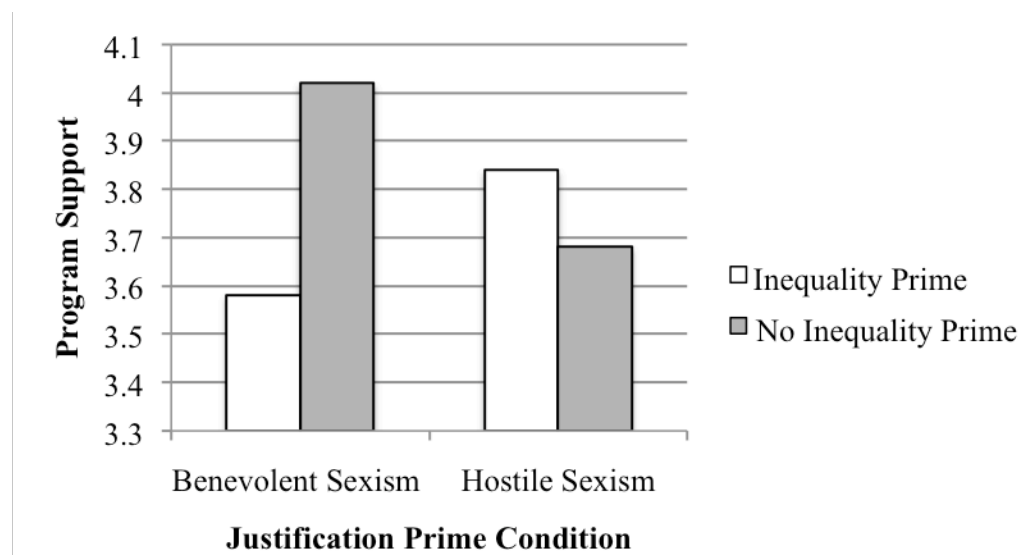


Figure 3. Support for programs aimed at reducing gender inequality as a function of inequality prime condition and justification prime condition.



Note. Lower numbers reflect greater support for female-targeted programs.