

The structure of ambivalence toward women – Legitimization of gender discrimination and prospects for change

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Abstract

One way in which sexism is distinct from other types of prejudice is its ambivalent nature. Women are both reviled and revered, depending on whether they fulfill or violate expectations concerning their gender roles. Basing on Ambivalent Sexism Theory (AST; Glick & Fiske, 1995, 1996, 2001), the following thesis explores dimensions that are not subsumed under AST that I consider critical to the perception of women. Specifically, based on data coming from qualitative and quantitative studies conducted in Poland and in the United States, I distinguish two additional springboards for sexism: 1. the belief that the fundamental role of a woman is that of the mother (together with the assumption that women's goals should be subsumed under others' goals and needs), and 2. the responsibility for aesthetics that is placed upon women. Subsequently, discriminant and predictive validity of the new dimensions is tested showing that these basic tenets form a richer structure of prejudice not encompassed by the existing sub-dimensions of AST. Theoretical implications of the findings and the universality of new dimensions are discussed.