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**Benevolence toward Men and Political Conservatism among
Married and Never-Married Women**
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Abstract

Research indicates that sexism allows women to justify men's privileged status; indeed, sexism has predicted women's conservative vote choice (Cassese & Barnes, 2018). Benevolent attitudes toward men (BM) are based in beliefs about women and men's interdependence (Glick & Fiske, 1999). Married women may experience greater interdependence and may desire to preserve beneficial structural power systems. The present research examined the relationship of BM to political conservatism among married and never-married women. Married and never-married women recruited from Prolific Academic completed a measure of political conservatism and the 10-item BM scale (Glick & Fiske, 1999). The results indicated that, as expected, married women were more conservative than were never-married women and expressed stronger BM. Further, married (vs. never-married) women and women who had more (vs. less) BM exhibited greater conservatism. Finally, the association between BM and greater conservatism was stronger for married than for never-married women. These conclusions remained when age and race were controlled. The political role of gendered attitudes typically focuses on perceptions of women, but attitudes toward men appear to separately influence political views.

Keywords: sexism, benevolence, conservatism, marriage, gender, interdependence

Benevolence toward Men and Political Conservatism among Married and Never-Married Women

The political behavior of American women is dramatically heterogeneous. In the 2016 U.S. presidential election, both the “women’s vote” that was widely expected to carry candidate Hillary Clinton and the “woman problem” plaguing then-candidate Donald Trump’s campaign were similarly expected to impact the decisions of American women at the polls (Graves, 2018). However, although a mere 4% of Black women and just one-quarter of Latina voters supported the controversial conservative candidate, a majority (53%) of White women cast their votes for Trump (CNN, 2016). Although American women have historically demonstrated greater willingness to endorse more liberal ideologies and identify more closely with the Democratic Party (Ondercin, 2017), the results of the 2016 presidential contest confirmed the prevailing preference for Republican presidential candidates among White women voters (Cassese & Barnes, 2018).

The liberal-conservative ideological divide in the United States is comprised of two interrelated concerns regarding issues of hierarchy, authority, and inequality (Bobbio, 1996). Left-right distinctions are drawn regarding advocating versus resisting social change, as well as rejecting versus accepting inequality (Jost et al., 2003). Such ideological differences impact individual motivations to justify existing structural systems and preserve the status quo, contributing to the ever-widening political divide within the United States. In examining the low political cohesion among American women, factors have been examined that are known to meaningfully impact justification motivations, such as educational attainment, class, and Whiteness (Cassese & Barnes, 2018). However, examinations of women’s attitudes toward

gender and gender-based inequality have revealed additional factors for consideration in the study of women's diverse political behavior.

Gendered Attitudes

The dual nature of gendered attitudes is conceptualized by the construct of ambivalent sexism and its constituent aspects of hostility and benevolence. Hostile sexism (HS) encompasses the antipathy toward women commonly associated with sexist attitudes (Allport, 1954). For example, “most women fail to appreciate fully all that men do for them” and “when women lose to men in a fair competition, they typically complain about being discriminated against” (Glick & Fiske, 2001, p. 118). Benevolent sexism (BS), however, involves a set of interrelated attitudes that also view women stereotypically, but do so in an apparently positive manner (Glick & Fiske, 1996). For example, “women should be cherished and protected by men” and “many women have a quality of purity that few men possess” (Glick & Fiske, 2001, p. 118). Consistent with the use of stereotypes to rationalize group status differences, both HS and BS serve to justify male domination and traditional gender roles (Jost, et al., 2004). Hostile sexism does so through the derogation of women who defy their prescribed role in society, while BS rewards women who “know their place” (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Sexist ideologies are predicated on patriarchal control of existing economic, political, and social institutions, in which men's social control is legitimized through the characterization of women as inherently inferior (Glick, et al., 1997). Women who accept hostile attitudes toward their own gender group have been demonstrated to hold more gender-traditional ideologies (Glick et al., 2004). Indeed, when explored as a potential factor impacting women's political behavior, both HS and denial of discrimination were found to strongly predict White women's votes for Trump in the 2016 election (Cassese & Barnes, 2018).

Ambivalent sexism functions to maintain the status quo through a complimentary system of social control (Thomae & Houston, 2016). Benevolent attitudes serve to reward women who conform to traditional gender roles, while hostile attitudes punish women who do not (Glick et al., 1997). In evaluations of female subtypes, for example, BS was utilized to reward women who endorsed conventional power relations and embraced traditional gender roles (Glick et al., 2004). As such, BS is particularly effective in contributing to the maintenance of existing gender inequalities. Benevolent sexism, with its acceptance of traditional gender roles and existing gender power structures, promises women provision and protection (Glick et al., 2000), as well as the assurance that “men’s power will be used to women’s advantage, if only they can secure a high-status male protector” (Glick & Fiske, 2001, p. 111). Women’s acceptance of traditional gender role differentiation may similarly motivate their endorsement of BS. Women from more gender-traditional nations were found to endorse BS more strongly than did men (Glick et al., 2004), and women’s endorsement of BS was associated with preferences for a mate who met the traditional provider role (Johannesen-Smith & Eagly, 2003).

Systemic interpersonal dependency between women and men serves as a necessary precursor for the development of sexist attitudes (Glick & Fiske, 1996). The systemic nature of women and men’s interpersonal dependency is less considered, however, in the role of women’s attitudes of benevolence toward men and the association of those attitudes with such behavioral outcomes as women’s vote choice. Glick and Fiske’s (1999) Ambivalence toward Men Inventory (AMI) provides an instrument by which subjectively positive and negative attitudes about men may be assessed. The measure’s three subfactors, *male structural power*, *gender differentiation*, and *sexuality*, are reflected in each of its two subscales, Hostility toward Men (HM) and Benevolence toward Men (BM). The BM subscale poses items assessing gender differentiation

as complimentary in nature, such as “men are more willing to put themselves in danger to protect others” (positively characterizing men as protectors and providers) and “even if both members of a couple work, the woman ought to be more attentive to taking care of her man at home” (highlighting women’s obligation to care for men domestically as compensation for men’s protection and provision). The positive evaluation of traditional gender power relations is reflected in the BM subscale’s subfactors of *maternalism*, *complimentary gender differentiation*, and *heterosexual intimacy*. The subscale’s complimentary characterization of gender differences emphasizes beliefs about women and men’s interdependence.

The efficacy of BM in contributing to the maintenance of existing power structures is demonstrated when examined in association with women’s acceptance of rape myths. In cases of sexual assault, rape myths are commonly employed in the assessment of blame (Chapleau et al. 2007). Rape myths serve this function through their use of stereotypical beliefs to trivialize the assault, attribute responsibility to the victim, and absolve the perpetrator of responsibility (Brownmiller, 1975; Burt, 1980; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). Women’s endorsement of BM has been demonstrated to rationalize men’s dominance in assessing blame for sexual assault offenses (Chapleau et al., 2007). The BM subscale’s *complimentary gender differentiation* subfactor was found to predict women’s acceptance of rape myths, suggesting that men are less likely to be held accountable for negative behaviors by women who admire their attributes of strength and risk-taking. Women’s rape myth acceptance was also predicted by the subscale’s *maternalism* subfactor, suggesting that women viewed the act of nurturing men as a path to gain their favor and thus indirectly access their power. The subfactor of *heterosexual intimacy*, however, most strongly predicted women’s acceptance of rape myths. The subfactor conveys the belief that women are incomplete without the love of a man, and its endorsement suggested that

women respondents may have viewed the sexual aggressor as a potential romantic partner rather than a rapist, or that victims may have been viewed as seeking a man's attention to secure a mate.

Beliefs about the natural interdependence of women and men may prompt women holding traditional gender beliefs to “actively construct their closest relationships with men in ways that ensure both greater dependence (eliciting BM) and power differences (eliciting HM)” (Glick et al., 2004, p. 715). For example, women high in BM have demonstrated a greater preference for partners who intend to undertake traditional gender roles (Thomae & Houston, 2016). Consequently, women with conventional gender beliefs may be more likely to experience the dependence on men that fosters BM (Glick et al., 2004).

Justification Motivations

System justification theory provides a framework for considering individual motivations to defend and justify existing social, economic, and political structures (Jost & van der Toom, 2012). In addressing motivations to defend the status quo, the theory also considers the seemingly paradoxical desire of disadvantaged group members to believe that existing systems are fair and legitimate. The utility of system-justifying beliefs in reducing threat and uncertainty contributes to its appeal for members of both dominant and disadvantaged groups (Jost & Hunyady, 2005). Even when existing structural power systems may be detrimental or disadvantageous to the self or social group, most members of society demonstrate a tendency to legitimate the status quo (Major, 1994).

Hostile sexism depends on patriarchy and gender differentiation for both its creation and reinforcement, as ideologies of superiority provide justification for the privileged status of dominant groups (Jost & van der Toom, 2012). As existing economic, political, and social

systems offer dramatically disparate advantages to American women, the endorsement of HS may serve to maintain women's relatively privileged status within those systems (Jost & Banji, 1994). For example, the adoption of sexist beliefs may enforce a status quo that provides White women advantages relative to women of other racial and ethnic groups, providing an avenue by which the disadvantage associated with their gender may be minimized, while the privilege associated with their race may be emphasized (Cassese & Barnes, 2018). The desire to maintain privileged status may provide a powerful incentive for an otherwise counterintuitive endorsement of sexist beliefs, particularly when the primary 'advantage' afforded to women by the status quo is that of race (Glick & Fiske, 2001). As discussed, benevolently sexist attitudes serve to mitigate women's resistance to existing gender power imbalances, also effectively contributing to the maintenance of gender inequality (Glick & Fiske, 2001). Mere exposure to benevolently sexist statements has been found to increase women's perceptions of life's fairness, suggesting that BS increases perceptions of the status quo's legitimacy (Jost & Kay, 2005).

Interdependence

In the systemic interpersonal dependency between women and men that predicates the development of sexist attitudes, marriage relationships serve a unique role. Marriage unions function to institutionalize the intimate connections between women and men. Beliefs about women and men's interdependence may impact women's perceptions of gender-related issues and subsequent understandings of self-interest. As such, marital relationships may influence women's favorable assessments of conservative political ideologies, which are often characterized by acceptance of inequality and resistance to social change (Bolzendahl & Myers, 2004). Liberal political ideologies, conversely, are typically characterized by desire for system change and are associated with policies advancing the rights and interests of women (Stout, et

al., 2017; Tate, 2014). The interdependence of White women with White men, for example, may motivate women to protect and prioritize those relationships as an avenue to maintain their existing privilege relative to more socially distant racial and ethnic groups (Cassese & Barnes, 2018; Glick & Fiske, 2001).

An individual's personal, internalized group identity provides a salient source of information when evaluating political ideologies. Group consciousness includes a political awareness of that group's position within existing social systems (Miller et al., 1981). Previous research has demonstrated a gender "marriage gap" in which married women tend toward lower levels of gender consciousness than do their unmarried peers (Levine-Rasky, 2011; Stout et al., 2017). It has been postulated that the political significance of marital status lies not in the institution's meaningful transformation of individual spouses' personal characteristics, but instead in the re-situation of an individual spouse within a different set of social networks and other circumstances (Stoker & Jennings, 1995). As women experience the changing social networks associated with marriage relationships, changes to their internalized group identities may also occur. Thus, women's awareness of their gender group's placement within society may also be affected. As such, political considerations of both self-interest and group benefit may undergo corresponding changes.

The related construct of gender linked fate refers to an individual's identification with their own gender group, with the perception that individual life outcomes are tied to the fate of the group (Dawson, 2004). In evaluating social and political contexts, women with greater levels of perceived gender linked fate have been found to rely more heavily on their own group orientation (Stout et al., 2017). Existing research has demonstrated a correlation between women's sense of linked fate and liberal political preferences, as well as the tendency toward

higher levels of gender linked fate in unmarried women than in married women (Stout et al., 2017). Further, the reduced levels of gender linked fate reported by married women relative to their unmarried counterparts within the same racial identification have been linked to variations in women's political ideology (Stout et al., 2017).

The impact of marriage and domestic relationships on partners' political preferences has been the subject of much scholarship. Spouses have been found to exert the greatest influence on the voting behavior of their partners (Harrop et al., 1991), and the levels of partners' political engagement have been found to converge dramatically during the initial years of marriage (Stoker & Jennings, 1995). The changing interdependence of partners throughout marital relationship stages has been examined in association with factors such as social networks, educational attainment, socio-economic status, employment, child-rearing, and gender role conformity. The changing nature of spouses' social networks is notable, however, in its potential influence on women's group identities. Both a reduction in the size of spouses' friendship networks and an increasing overlap in spouses' social contacts over time have been previously identified (Kalmijn, 2003). Further, women have been found to share their own social contacts with their spouses less often and to experience a reduction in shared social contacts after having children (Kalmijn, 2003).

Additional gender differences have emerged in examinations of personal identity, gender role attitudes, and the political values of spouses. Women who more strongly endorsed domestically-oriented values also more strongly endorsed the shared political values of the couple, while women's significantly weaker endorsement of the couples' shared political values was associated with their strong endorsement of career-oriented personal values (Kan & Heath, 2006). Further, when couples associated social status with employment, women's political

partisanship was less strongly associated with their own occupation than with that of their husbands (Erikson & Goldthorpe, 1992).

Aims of the Present Study

In human societies, the structural relations between women and men are characterized by some common features. Men are typically granted greater power and status than women, for example, and women and men are commonly differentiated by social roles (Eagly & Wood, 1999; Harris & Johnson, 2000). Further, women and men develop dependencies and build intimacy through the biological constant of sexual reproduction (Glick & Fiske, 2001). As such, women who are married likely experience greater interdependence than do never-married women. In the present study, I seek to better understand how the preservation of beneficial structural power systems may differently motivate American women based on their perceptions of interdependence with men, operationalizing interdependence in terms of marital status.

Just as the impact of marriage on spouses' political preferences has been the subject of much examination, so too have spouses' personal characteristics been studied regarding their influence on the voting behaviors of their partner. Analysis of whether women's voting behaviors are subject to greater influence from their own characteristics (such as employment and socioeconomic status) or from those of their spouse have been extensively examined (see Sorensen, 1994, for a review). The impact of marriage on individuals' perceptions of the world and their subsequent attitudes toward issues such as gender and political ideology have also been previously explored (Kalmijn, 2003; Kingston & Finkel, 1987; Stoker & Jennings, 1995). However, the relationship between women's political behavior and their beliefs about women and men's interdependence has been less explored. Similarly, the relationship between women's attitudes toward men and their own political preferences also remains largely unexamined. In the

present study, I examine these less-considered factors in evaluating the relationships among women's marital status, benevolent attitudes toward men, and political conservatism.

Interdependence and political conservatism. It is hypothesized that the participant sample will demonstrate consistency with tendencies toward greater gender interdependence, reduced perceptions of gender linked fate, and lower gender consciousness found in married women, reflective of motivations to maintain privileged status through the normalization of traditional gender relations and justification of gender-based inequality within existing social systems. Consequently, I predicted that married (vs. never-married) women would be more likely to self-identify as politically conservative.

Interdependence and benevolent attitudes toward men. Existing research indicates that women's endorsement of sexist beliefs may be uniquely informed by tendencies toward greater gender interdependence (Glick et al., 2004; Johannesen-Smith & Eagly, 2003), by which the prioritization of marital relationships may be motivated to preserve an advantageous status quo. Previous work also indicates that attitudes of benevolence toward men are associated with women's preference for traditional gender roles and their rationalization of men's dominance. These factors suggest a hypothesis in which married women may consider men more benevolently than will women reporting other relationship statuses. Consequently, I predicted that married women would report higher BM subscale scores than would never-married women.

Interdependence, benevolent attitudes toward men, and political conservatism. Existing scholarship suggests that married women's endorsement of hostile sexism may facilitate the preservation of comparatively advantageous relationships through the justification of gender-based inequality. In emphasizing the interdependence of women and men, benevolent attitudes toward men may also serve to effectively maintain existing gender power structures. A

hypothesis is thus suggested in which attitudes of greater benevolence toward men may help facilitate preservation of a relatively advantageous status quo, thus potentially impacting the political ideology of married women. As such, I predicted that BM subscale scores would be more strongly associated with endorsement of political conservatism among married women than among never-married women.

Method

Participants

Female participants ($N = 129$) were recruited via Prolific Academic as part of a larger study about perceptions of social issues. They were paid US\$1.50 each. Participants ranged in age from 19 to 72 years old, with most participants identifying as White, followed by Black, multiethnic, Latinx, and Asian. Most participants also identified as heterosexual, followed by bisexual, lesbian, and other or unsure. (See Table 1.)

Approximately 57% of participants reported having never been married, and 43% indicated that they were currently married. Never-married participants ($n = 73$) ranged in age from 19 to 72 years old, and most identified as White, followed by Black, multiracial, Asian, and Latinx. Most never-married women participants identified as straight, followed by bisexual, lesbian, and other or unsure.

Married participants ($n = 56$) ranged in age from 21 to 71 years old; note, however, that they were, on average, older than never-married women. Married women also largely identified as White, followed by Latinx, multiracial, and Black; however, married participants were more likely to be women of color than were never-married women. Most married women participants also identified as straight, followed by bisexual and lesbian.

Procedure

Participants completed the following measure as well as a demographic questionnaire that included a single item measure of political conservatism on a scale ranging from 1 (*very liberal*) to 7 (*very conservative*). (See Appendix A.)

Benevolence toward men. Participants indicated their agreement with 10 items (e.g., “Women ought to take care of their men at home, because men would fall apart if they had to fend for themselves”) comprising the Benevolence toward Men (BM) subscale measure ($\alpha = .88$) of the Ambivalence toward Men Inventory (Glick & Fiske, 1999). Statements were rated on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). (See Appendix B.)

Analyses

Independent samples *t*-tests were used to assess whether political conservatism and benevolent attitudes toward men differed as a function of marital status. Simple correlations were calculated to examine the relationships among variables. Multiple regression models were also estimated to test whether marital status and Benevolence toward Men were uniquely associated with political ideology and, in a separate model, whether the relationship between Benevolence toward Men and political ideology depended on marital status (i.e., the Marital Status X BM interaction). Additional analyses tested whether the relationships remained when age and race were controlled.

Results

Means and standard deviations are reported in Table 2. Married women exhibited greater political conservatism and stronger benevolence toward men than did their never-married counterparts (Figure 1). Correlations among measures are reported in Table 3. Older women exhibited greater benevolence toward men than did younger women.

I next estimated multiple regression models to examine the relationships of benevolent attitudes toward men and marital status to conservatism. In the first model, conservatism was regressed on benevolence toward men and marital status. Table 4 displays the results of this analysis. Controlling for attitudes of benevolence toward men, married women reported more conservative political ideology than did never-married women. When controlling for marital status, women with more (vs. less) benevolent attitudes toward men exhibited greater conservatism.

In the second model, I examined the Marital Status X Benevolence toward Men interaction, which was significant (see Table 4). Simple effects tests indicated that the association between greater benevolence toward men and greater conservatism was more pronounced for married women, $b = 1.22$, $t = 7.36$, $p < .001$, as compared to never-married women, $b = .51$, $t = 3.66$, $p = .001$ (Figure 2).

Recall that married women were generally older than the never-married women in my sample and that the never-married women were more racially diverse. I therefore conducted parallel analyses in which I controlled for age and race. These analyses yielded the same conclusions as those reported above.

Discussion

Interdependence and Political Conservatism

It was expected that married (vs. never-married) women would be more likely to self-identify as politically conservative. This prediction was supported, as married women reported more conservative political ideology than did never-married participants. The significance of the relationship remained when age, race, and attitudes of benevolence were controlled. This result is

consistent with previous findings linking marriage to more gender-traditional views and more conservative political ideologies among women (Bolzendahl & Myers, 2004; Stout, et al., 2017).

The lower levels of gender linked fate found in married women suggest that marriage may contribute to changes in women's perceptions of self-interest. When women's perceptions of personal benefit are tied more strongly to the interests of their spouse than to the interests of their gender, they may in turn experience greater motivation to both prioritize the marital relationship and protect the interests of their spouse. Resistance to social change and acceptance of inequality are both correlates of conservative political ideology (Jost et al., 2009). Women's desire to protect the interests of men may provide incentive for their endorsement of the status quo; the prioritization of relationships with men may similarly motivate women's acceptance of existing systems of inequality.

Beginning in the last quarter of the 20th century, marriage has undergone a process of deinstitutionalization in the United States; that is, the social norms defining partners' behavior in social institutions such as marriage have undergone marked change (Cherlin, 2004). Cohabitation, for example, once considered a fringe phenomenon, is now largely considered acceptable as an alternative to marriage (Kiernan, 2002; Smock & Gupta, 2002). Socially normative standards no longer demand the institutionalization of women's relationships with men into legal marriage partnerships. As such, a woman's decision to institutionalize an existing relationship with a man into a marriage partnership, or to pursue a relationship that may be likely to become a marital partnership, may have implications beyond the mere exercise of personal preference.

It has been postulated that marriage confers the benefit of *enforceable trust*, in which the extralegal commitments of relationship agreements may be pursued with less emotional risk and

less fear of personal abandonment (Cherlin, 2000; Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993). The findings of the present study, in which married women reported more conservative ideologies than did never-married women, suggest the association of marital status with motivations that have been similarly linked to endorsement of conservative political ideologies. Psychological motivations such as uncertainty reduction (Jost et al., 2009) may be similarly associated with the decision to pursue a marital relationship.

Interdependence and Benevolent Attitudes toward Men

It was expected that married women would exhibit greater BM than would never-married women. This prediction was supported, as married women expressed stronger BM than did never-married women, and the relationship remained significant when age, race, and political conservatism were controlled. This result is consistent with previous findings linking BM with women's beliefs in the interdependent nature of their relationships with men (Chapleau et al., 2007).

Both the positive evaluation of traditional gender power relations and the complimentary characterization of gender differences found within the BM subscale suggest that the stronger endorsement of BM by married women may reflect married women's beliefs about women and men's interdependence. Beliefs about gender interdependence are often predicated on assumptions about the immutable nature of gender differences. Beliefs about the essentialist nature of gender differences reflect the tendency to view group members as possessing an underlying "essence" that is responsible for properties inherent to the members' group identity (Brescoll et al., 2013; Gelman, 2000). Gender essentialism is often attributed to inherent biological factors and presumed to be fixed and unchanging in nature (Brescoll et al., 2013). The three subfactors assessed within the BM subscale reflect beliefs consistent with the presumption

of immutable gender differences: women's lower social status relative to men is preordained (*complimentary gender differentiation*), women have a responsibility to care for men (*maternalism*), and women need to seek the company of men (*heterosexual intimacy*) (Chapleau et al., 2007). Beliefs about the essential nature of women's interdependence with men may impact the desire of women to pursue relationships that are more likely to become marital partnerships, or to seek the institutionalization of existing relationships with men into legal marriage partnerships.

Beliefs about women and men's interdependence are fundamental to the ideal of *companionate marriage*, in which marital satisfaction is perceived to derive from each partner's successful fulfillment of their marital roles. As the meaning ascribed to marital relationships has changed with evolving social norms, the alternative ideal of *individualized marriage* has emerged, in which marital satisfaction is perceived to derive from each partner's development of their own sense of self (Cherlin, 2004). It has been postulated that women who endorse conventional gender beliefs may choose relationships with men that ensure greater dependence and power differences (Glick et al., 2004). Further, women's endorsement of benevolent sexism has been linked to acceptance of gender-traditional roles and preferences for mates who fulfill traditional gender roles (Glick et al., 2004; Johannesen-Smith & Eagly, 2003). The findings of the present study, in which married women expressed stronger BM than did never-married women, suggest that the desire to pursue and fulfill traditional gender roles may be associated with a woman's decision to seek a marital union.

Interdependence, Benevolent Attitudes toward Men, and Political Conservatism

It was predicted that BM subscale scores would be more strongly associated with endorsement of political conservatism among married women than among never-married

women. This prediction was supported. This result is consistent with previous findings linking women's conventional gender beliefs with relationship choices that foster greater interdependence and justify existing gender power structures (Glick et.al., 2004).

Limitations and Avenues for Future Research

The present study examined women's interdependence with men only within the context of heterosexual relationships, as the BM subscale's *sexuality* subfactor assessed beliefs about heterosexual intimacy. Also, the scope of my examination of benevolent attitudes toward men and political conservatism was limited to groups of married and never-married women, potentially limiting the generalizability of results beyond the heterosexual relationship choices within those two groups. A larger participant sample size and additional relationship status designations (such as divorced or separated) may be utilized for further study.

The relationship between marital status and women's endorsement of conservative political ideologies may be further examined in association with psychological motivations of threat management. Right-wing authoritarianism (RWA), for example, a measure assessing security motivations to maintain stability and social order, has been associated with socially conservative political ideologies (Sibley, et al., 2007). As traditionally-oriented women are more likely to marry at higher rates and earlier ages (Bianchi, 1995), the association of marital status with RWA-indexed, threat-driven motivations to preserve traditional values, for example, may warrant further investigation.

The desire to institutionalize an existing relationship into a marriage union may reflect the motivation to pursue and fulfill traditional gender roles. As such, women's political decision-making choices may also be further examined in association with the endorsement of gender essentialism. By explaining gender differences as inherent and immutable in nature, gender

essentialism functions as a system-justifying ideology (Brescoll et al., 2013). Indeed, gender essentialist beliefs have been found to correlate with other system-justifying ideologies such as sexism, racism, social dominance, and authoritarianism (Jayaratne et al., 2006; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999).

Together, beliefs in the essentialist nature of gender differences and attitudes of greater benevolence toward men may have implications for women's political decision-making. Subjectively positive attitudes toward existing structural power inequalities are measured by the BM subscale's *maternalism* subfactor, while the corresponding *resentment of paternalism* subfactor within the Hostility toward Men (HM) subscale measures subjectively negative attitudes toward structural power inequalities. *Resentment of paternalism* has been previously demonstrated to predict democratic (system-changing) vote choice (Tate, 2008). The complimentary nature of gender differentiation (emphasized by BM) and the inherent immutability of gender differences (presumed by gender essentialism) suggest that the stronger BM expressions among married women found within this present study may have implications for women's willingness to accept inequality, an ideological component of conservative political ideology. As such, further investigation may be warranted regarding relationships among women's beliefs about gender essentialism, decisions to pursue a marital relationship, and political decision-making.

Women of various racial and ethnic backgrounds encounter differing experiences of discrimination as well as differing circumstances of gender interdependence. As such, the intersection of gender, race, and marital status may differently impact both attitudes of benevolence toward men and political preferences. Intersectional examinations of group-based inequalities permit the consideration of multiple intersecting group memberships, rather than the

consideration of a single group category (Crenshaw, 1989). In evaluating women's support for conservative political candidates within the intersectional framework of gender, race, and social class, for example, both race and educational attainment were found to predict both women's endorsement of sexism and women's conservative vote choice (Cassese & Barnes, 2018). Sexist attitudes and conservative political ideology both serve to enforce a status quo that may provide White women advantages relative to women of other racial and ethnic groups.

The application of an intersectional framework to issues of gender linked fate also provides insight into how beliefs about women and men's interdependence may impact justification motivations and political preferences. Racial and ethnic group differences have been found to impact the sense of shared group outcomes among women. Black women, for example, typically report the highest levels of gender linked fate among racial groups (Gay & Tate 1998; Simien, 2006). Although married women typically report lower levels of gender linked fate than do unmarried women, married and unmarried Black women have been found to demonstrate no significant difference in their reported levels of gender linked fate (Stout, et al., 2017). The findings of this present study, in which acceptance of complimentary gender differences and desire to preserve the status quo were associated more strongly among married women than among never-married women, suggest that beliefs about women and men's interdependence may impact how the interests of intersecting group memberships are considered within the political decision-making processes of women.

Beliefs about women and men's interdependence may be considered in further examinations of the intersecting factors that influence women's political behavior. White women, for example, are more likely to rely exclusively on their husbands for need fulfillment, while Black women tend to rely on the assistance of broader kinship networks (Bulcroft &

Bulcroft, 1993). Further, White women are more likely to marry and stay married than are women of other racial groups, whereas Black women are more willing to dissolve marriage relationships than are comparable White women (Aughinbaugh, et al., 2013; Cherlin, 1998). As women with greater levels of perceived gender linked fate rely more heavily on their own group orientation when evaluating social and political contexts, the impact of marital status on women's intersecting group memberships may warrant further consideration in examinations of political decision-making among women.

Conclusion

To better understand how the preservation of structural power systems may differently motivate American women based on gender interdependence, I examined the relationships among women's marital status, benevolent attitudes toward men, and political conservatism. Consistent with previous research, married women reported more politically conservative ideology and exhibited stronger benevolence toward men than did never-married women. Although benevolence toward men was associated with stronger conservatism for both groups, the relationship was found to be stronger for married women, as was anticipated. In examinations of the low political cohesion among American women, a myriad of potentially associated factors may be considered. Women's beliefs about the interdependence of women and men, women's attitudes of benevolence toward men, and women's motivations surrounding the institution of marriage may also warrant inclusion among such associated factors.

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Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Women Participants

	Full Sample (<i>N</i> = 129)		Married Women (<i>n</i> = 56)		Never-Married Women (<i>n</i> = 73)	
Age in years (<i>M</i> , <i>SD</i>)	35.11	11.62	38.9	10.73	31.3	12.52
Racial identification (<i>n</i> , %)						
White	88	68.2	48	85.7	40	54.8
Black	15	11.6	2	3.6	13	17.8
multiracial	12	9.3	3	5.4	9	12.3
Latinx	7	5.4	3	5.4	4	5.5
Asian	7	5.4	0	0	7	9.6
Sexual orientation (<i>n</i> , %)						
Straight	105	81.4	52	92.9	53	72.6
Bisexual	12	9.3	2	3.6	10	13.7
Lesbian	8	6.2	2	3.6	6	8.2
Other/Unsure	3	2.3	0	0	3	4.1
Declined to answer	1	.8	0	0	1	1.4

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations for Political Conservatism and Benevolence toward Men

	Full Sample (<i>N</i> = 129)		Married Women (<i>n</i> = 56)		Never-Married Women (<i>n</i> = 73)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Political Conservatism	3.25	1.61	3.82	1.83	2.68	1.38
Benevolence toward Men	2.68	1.08	2.98	1.06	2.38	1.09

****p* < .001. ***p* < .01.

Table 3

Correlations of Age, Political Conservatism, and Benevolence toward Men by Marital Status

Married Women (<i>n</i> = 56)		
Variable	1	2
1. Age	—	—
2. Political Conservatism	.13	—
3. Benevolence toward Men	.23	.71***

Never-Married Women (<i>n</i> = 73)		
Variable	1	2
1. Age	—	—
2. Political Conservatism	.11	—
3. Benevolence toward Men	.12	.40***

Note. *N* = 129.****p* < .001.

Table 4

Political Conservatism as a Function of Marital Status, Benevolence toward Men, and Their Interaction

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>F</i>
Model 1			
Marital Status	.32	.124	6.92**
Benevolence toward Men	.81	.110	53.44***
Model 2			
Marital Status X Benevolence toward Men	.28	.012	551.78***

Note. $N = 129$.*** $p < .001$. ** $p < .01$.

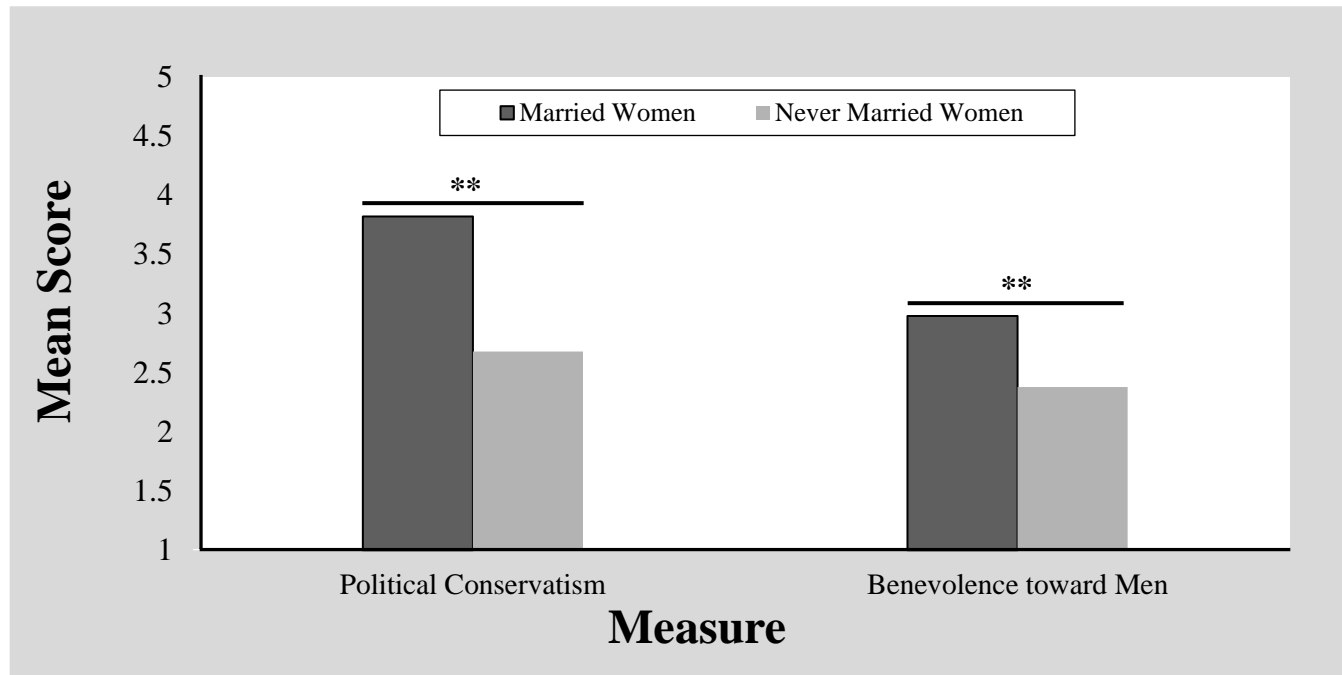


Figure 1. $N = 129$. Mean scores of political conservatism and Benevolence toward Men for married and never-married women participants.

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

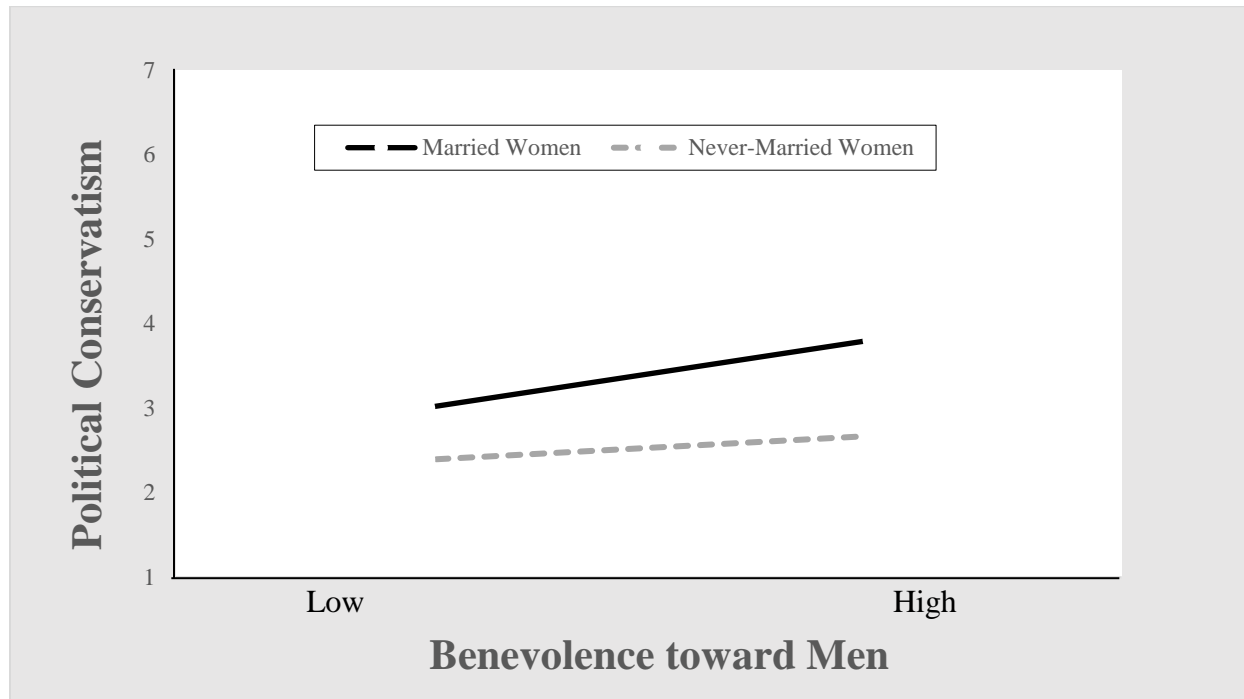


Figure 2. $N = 129$. Marital Status X Benevolence toward Men interaction.

APPENDIX A

Demographics

1. What is your age?
2. What is your gender?
 - a. Woman
 - b. Man
 - c. Transgender
 - d. Gender Queer or Other
3. What is your racial/ethnic background?
 - a. Asian/Pacific Islander
 - b. Black/African American
 - c. Hispanic/Latino/a
 - d. Middle Eastern/Arab
 - e. Native American
 - f. East Indian
 - g. White/Caucasian
 - h. Other
4. If you would like to elaborate on your racial or ethnic background, please do so here.
5. How would you describe your sexual orientation?
 - a. Heterosexual (straight)
 - b. Gay or Lesbian
 - c. Bisexual
 - d. Other/Unsure
6. How would you describe your marital status?
 - a. Married
 - b. Widowed
 - c. Divorced
 - d. Separated
 - e. Never married
7. How would you rate your political ideology? 1 (*very liberal*) to 7 (*very conservative*)

APPENDIX B

Benevolence toward Men (Glick & Fiske, 1999)

1. Even if both members of a couple work, the women ought to be more attentive to taking care of her man at home.
2. Men are less likely to fall apart in emergencies than women are.
3. Every woman needs a male partner who will cherish her.
4. A woman will never be truly fulfilled in her life if she doesn't have a committed, long-term relationship with a man.
5. Men are mainly useful to provide financial security for women.
6. Every woman ought to have a man she adores.
7. Men are more willing to put themselves in danger to protect others.
8. Women are incomplete without men.
9. Men are more willing to take risks than women.
10. Women ought to take care of their men at home, because men would fall apart if they had to fend for themselves.