

**Deconstructing Sexism: Examining the Role of Social Dominance Orientation in the
Relationship Between Agency and Sexism in India and Mexico**

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Abstract

Gender inequality and sexism persist globally. This study explores the cultural mechanisms behind these issues, examining how Community Collectivism and Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) predict Ambivalent Sexism. Participants from India and Mexico (N= 508; 252 females) completed measures of agency (individual and communal), sexism (hostile and benevolent), and SDO. Results revealed more complex interactions than anticipated. While individual agency was not directly linked to hostile sexism, it did predict benevolent sexism, with SDO partially mediating this relationship. Community agency, on the other hand, positively correlated with both types of sexism. While the analysis did not support a simple mediation effect for SDO, the findings suggest a more complex interaction between community agency, SDO and the two types of sexism. These findings challenge the assumption that agency inherently reduces sexism. Different explanations are explored for how individuals potentially use agency to justify benevolent sexism within group hierarchies. The study highlights the need for further research, particularly exploring the influence of SDO on sexism. By understanding these intricate relationships, we can develop more effective interventions to combat sexism and promote gender equality.

Keywords: Ambivalent Sexism, Hostile Sexism, Benevolent Sexism, Social Dominance Orientation, Community Collectivism, Individual Agency, Community Agency

Deconstructing Sexism: Examining the Role of Social Dominance Orientation in the Relationship Between Agency and Sexism in India and Mexico

According to the most recent UN report, nearly 89,000 women and girls were killed intentionally in 2022, the highest yearly number recorded in the past two decades (Me et al., 2023). Almost one in three women have been subjected to physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence, non-partner sexual violence, or both at least once in their lives. The UN report suggests that most of these killings are gender motivated. Violence against women and girls is the most pervasive human rights violation rooted in gender inequality and discrimination, unequal power relations, and harmful social norms. Furthermore, the latest World Economic Forum report (2023) shows persistent and significant gender gaps in economic participation, political empowerment, educational attainment and even health and survival. Understanding the underlying causes of sexism is crucial for addressing these broader societal issues. This is where the societal relevance of this research lies; there is a dire need to study the inner workings of sexism and try to understand its causes.

In the present study, we zoom in on the cultural factors that relate to gender discrimination and the harmful social norms that fuel it. The World's Women Report (UN, 2020) states that regional variation in the rates of intimate partner violence persists, with women in Oceania, Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa facing the greatest risk. There also seem to be large within-country differences. A few studies have suggested cultural factors, such as social norms, may explain both the between-country and within-country differences (Akkuş, 2021; Lee, Pratto & Li, 2007). Social norms are local and universal cultural features that enable people to understand their identities, the way they relate and interact to one another and are expected to

think and act in their sub-groups (Pratto et al., 2000). This is where Community Collectivism comes in, which is a social dynamic approach to conceptualizing culture (Akkuş et al., 2017).

Community Collectivism assumes that cultural beliefs are influenced by one's immediate social surroundings, their communities and the important values of these communities. These communal values center around fostering loyalty, upholding the hierarchy, and preserving group honor, ultimately ensuring the cohesion and structure of the group. Previous research has shown that cultural values, aimed at regulating social behavior within the community, can indeed help explain between-community differences in ambivalent sexism (Akkuş, 2021). This paper seeks to validate this association and uncover the role that Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) possibly plays.

SDO is a measurement of "the general desire to establish and maintain hierarchically structured intergroup relations regardless of the position of one's own group(s) within this hierarchy" (Sidanius et al, 2016). Previous research has consistently demonstrated a robust association between sexism and SDO (Austin & Jackson, 2019; Hellmer et al., 2018; Seitova et al., 2023). The theoretical justification for this relationship is rooted in Social Dominance Theory (SDT), which suggests that individuals with high levels of SDO are more likely to maintain and support social hierarchies that favor those at the top (Pratto et al., 2000). Such individuals may perceive certain groups as "inferior" and hold negative attitudes toward them. We believe that culture may serve as the mechanism that defines the hierarchy and enforces it through values. In understanding the interconnectedness of culture, sexism, and social dominance, we gain valuable insights into the complex dynamics that contribute to the perpetuation of gender-based violence and inequality.

Therefore, the present study aims to investigate if Community Collectivism is associated with Ambivalent Sexism and if SDO can largely explain this relationship. As explained above, previous studies have found a correlation between both collectivism and sexism and SDO and sexism. Additionally, SDO seems to mediate the relationship between political conservatism and sexism (Seitova et al., 2023) and that political conservatism correlates with community collectivism (Akkuş et al., 2019). Accordingly, there is reason to believe that SDO will also mediate the relationship between community collectivism and sexism. The scientific relevance of this paper lies in investigating how cultural values are socialized and transmitted and whether SDO plays a significant role in this transmission.

By exploring the relationship between community values, SDO, and sexism, we hope to shed light on the underlying mechanisms driving discriminatory behaviors and focus on targeting this specific psychological mechanism. In literature, values are believed to enforce or diminish prejudice such as sexism (Mikolajczak & Pietrzak, 2014). In the present study, we aim to investigate the extent to which sexist attitudes have a basis in cultural values and address and mitigate them accordingly. Therefore, the question this study seeks to answer is: What is the relationship between Community Collectivism and Ambivalent Sexism, and to what extent does Social Dominance Orientation mediate this relationship?

To answer this question, the present paper reports the results of secondary data from two studies conducted in India and Mexico which score comparatively low on indices of sexual equality (WEF, 2018). Specifically, intimate partner violence in Mexico remains a significant issue, with almost one out of four women 15 and older (23.9%) reporting having experienced violence in the previous 12 months (World's Women, 2020). There is a big variation within the country of Mexico with the states of Mexico varying from 16.2% to 31.4% in intimate partner

violence reports (INEGI, 2016). India ranks 127th out of 146 countries on the global gender gap index (WEF, 2023) and is considered one of the most dangerous countries for women worldwide due to the high risk of sexual violence and being forced into slave labor (Goldsmith & Beresford, 2018). These countries are of interest as they have different social, cultural and religious backgrounds leaving space to explore the possible mediation of SDO on the relationship between Community Collectivism and Ambivalent Sexism.

Theory

Ambivalent Sexism: The Distinction Between Hostile and Benevolent Sexism

Ambivalent sexism is a theoretical framework, conceptualized to explain the paradoxical nature of sexism, that distinguishes it as hostile and benevolent (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Hostile Sexism (HS) is similar to other forms of prejudice as it involves hostility and derogation of the outgroup, in this case, women. This is a direct and explicit expression of sexism that is actively seeking to prevent women from gaining power and social status. Benevolent Sexism (BS) is a set of sexist attitudes that depict women in a stereotypical and restricting way that however seems positive. This type of sexism is patronizing, portraying women as reliant on men's protection. In this context, men serve as providers and protectors, and women reciprocate as caregivers and romantic partners. It is presumably well-meaning, hence the term 'benevolent', but perpetuates inequality and gender stereotypes (Dardenne et al., 2007), reducing women's confidence in their abilities (Dumont et al., 2010), and discrediting calls for equality by portraying women as beneficiaries of sexism (Becker & Wright, 2011).

According to the Ambivalent Sexism Theory (Glick & Fiske, 1996), both components of Ambivalent Sexism consist of three major themes: patriarchy, gender role differentiation and

heterosexual intimacy. HS includes dominative paternalism, competitive gender differentiation and hostile heterosexuality. It includes explicit negative attitudes, antipathy (mostly, towards non-traditional women) and an exaggeration of the perceived gender differences by trivializing women or perceiving them as sex objects. In contrast, BS includes protective paternalism, complementary gender differentiation and heterosexual intimacy. It consists of seemingly positive attitudes, such as admiration and glorification, towards traditional women who obey the gender roles. These attitudes propose a kinder and more gentle way of treating women but still strengthen the traditional gender roles by supporting the weakness, incompetency and low status of women compared to men. To conclude, HS covers the issues of punishing norm-violating women and endorsing traditional gender roles and BS emphasizes the dependence of men on women by romanticizing sexual relationships with women. Both benevolent and hostile sexism support the patriarchal order in society (Glick & Fiske, 2001).

Despite a positive correlation between the two components in most studies (e.g., Austin & Jackson, 2019; Glick & Fiske, 1996; Hellmer et al., 2018; Sibley & Becker, 2012), some subgroups (e.g., non-student men) show no correlation between HS and BS. Therefore, we will explore the correlation in our sample, treating HS and BS as distinct concepts.

In the present study, we will examine how Community Collectivism and Social Dominance Orientation interact with the two components of Ambivalent Sexism, Hostile and Benevolent Sexism.

Cultural Values and Gender Dynamics: Investigating the Role of Community Collectivism

Community Collectivism is a term used to describe cultural beliefs on a community level (Akkuş et al., 2017). It includes values and practices on an individual and a perceived

community level as it considers culture to be established and maintained within local communities. The community (e.g., family and extended family) consists of real people in the immediate environment of the individual. When acting within this setting or when expressing oneself, one must consider ongoing relationships and their perceived values as inferred from past actions and manifested beliefs. It is within communities like these that values are predominantly molded, as they are essential for facilitating coordinated social interaction, group functioning, and survival. Therefore, Community Collectivism includes universal dimensions that are found cross-culturally and it is used to describe how a group is conserved and regulated. Community Collectivism consists of four values- three collectivist and one individualistic. Loyalty serves to preserve the commitment to the group, honor maintains norm and rule compliance and hierarchy dictates the roles and positions within the group. These values are clustered together into personal collectivism or community collectivism. The individualistic value reflects the level of agency and individual responsibility in the community and consists of personal agency and community agency. The individualistic value anticipates actions that are essential to group cohesion such as the sense of closeness to family and friends, interpretations of socially acceptable conduct like caring for elders or choosing marital status and attitudes towards group protests in response to inequality (Akkuş et al., 2017; 2019). The present study is based on the premise that cultural values influence gender dynamics such as the hierarchy within the community, power dynamics and types of behavior that are considered normal and acceptable from men and women of the community.

Leaper and Friedman (2007) have highlighted important ways in which gender is socialized in toddlers and adolescents. Sexist practices and attitudes people adopt as adults can be traced back to children's gender-conforming interactions with peers during play, sports and

everyday activities. Socialization and cultural values concerning gender are internalized affecting one's behavior and judgment (Brody & Hall, 2009). In addition to this approach, we can examine the role that intersubjective perceptions have on behavior (Chiu et al., 2010) which are individuals' perceptions of and adaptations to the normative context. These perceptions seem to predict conformity and traditional behaviors (Fischer, 2012). Therefore, gender relations seem to be influenced by differences in values. Finally, when examining community collectivism and sexism there seems to be a significant correlation between the two (Akkuş, 2021).

Therefore, we hypothesize that Community Collectivism significantly correlates with Ambivalent Sexism and its components (HS and BS). Specifically, we expect Collectivism to positively correlate with both HS and BS and Agency to negatively correlate with both HS and BS.

Exploring the Mediating Role of Social Dominance Orientation between Community Collectivism and Ambivalent Sexism

According to Pratto et al. (2000), people high on Social Dominance Orientation generally support group hierarchy and believe that social groups do and should differ in value (group inequality), whereas people low on SDO support group equality and oppose group differentiation along the lines of status and power. Two facets of SDO are distinguished: dominance (SDO-D) and anti-egalitarianism (SDO-E) (Ho et al., 2015). Dominance is an active preference for explicit group dominance, competition, hierarchy, and blatant oppression of subordinate groups. Anti-egalitarianism describes a more subtle approach to maintaining inequality through opposing measures designed to reduce it, and supporting hierarchy-enhancing social structures such as legitimizing myths that explain inequality as normal and natural. In the present paper, we will use the SDO scale as a whole, acknowledging the recent development and potentially stronger

predictive power of its subcomponents, SDO-D and SDO-E, to keep the research brief and focused. SDO can be viewed as a general preference for group-based hierarchy that predicts prejudice, and this trend should occur for both advantaged and disadvantaged group members, although it may be stronger for advantaged group members (Pratto et al., 2000).

Research shows a strong positive correlation between SDO and both aspects of Ambivalent Sexism across cultures (e.g., Austin & Jackson, 2019; Pratto et al., 1994; Pratto et al., 2000; Seitova et al., 2023). Social Dominance Theory suggests Ambivalent Sexism serves as a mechanism for individuals with high SDO to justify and maintain hierarchical structures.

Concerning SDO and Community Collectivism, to our knowledge this association has not been studied before. However, we have reason to believe there is a significant relationship between the two variables. When defining the Social Dominance Theory, Pratto and colleagues (1994), emphasized that SDO is prone to change and is dependent on four different variables: group status, gender, socialization and temperament. Each person has a predisposition to express social dominance which is heightened under specific social conditions (group status and socialization) and individual characteristics (personality and temperament). Research indicates that individual-level factors affect SDO along with socialization, existing power relations and macro-contextual variables, such as conservatism, ethnic prejudice and sexism (Fischer et al., 2012; Pratto et al., 2000). As stated before, Community Collectivism measures cultural values on a community level, so values on the micro-level. The factors Hierarchy and Honor of Community Collectivism are expected to be similar and correlate highly with SDO. Furthermore, SDO seems to mediate the relationship between political conservatism and Ambivalent Sexism, while high Community Collectivism correlates with high political conservatism (Akkuş et al.,

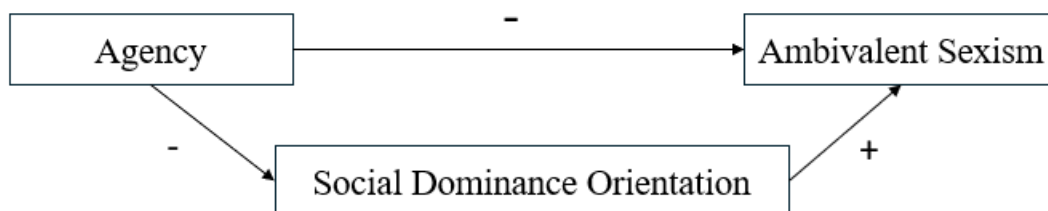
2019). For these reasons, we believe that SDO could mediate the relationship between Community Collectivism and Ambivalent Sexism.

As for confounders, we will control for gender, age and educational background as research has shown that they could act as confounders when measuring sexism and SDO. Specifically, men seem to be higher on SDO and ambivalent sexism than women (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Pratto et al., 2000) and low educational level seems to predict ambivalent sexism (Hellmer et al., 2018). Additionally, men's age seems to influence their sexist attitudes (Glick & Fiske, 1996).

Accordingly, we hypothesize that SDO will mediate the relationship between Community Collectivism and Ambivalent Sexism. The positive relationship between Collectivism and HS and BS is expected to be stronger for people with high SDO and the negative relationship between Agency and HS and BS to be weaker for people with high SDO (Model 1). In the present study we will focus on Agency and not Collectivism as the factors Hierarchy and Honor are expected to have some overlap with SDO. Agency, on the other hand, is positively correlated to Collectivism but remains its own factor that is distinct and different from SDO.

Model 1

Conceptual Model for the Mediation of SDO on Agency and Ambivalent Sexism



Method

Participants and Research Sample

Data were drawn from a cross-sectional study conducted in India and Mexico in 2016 investigating the relationship between cultural values and behavioral responses to sexist behavior (Akkuş, 2021). Collecting data from one time point was the most financially and pragmatically feasible option considering the objective difficulties of conducting studies on different continents. Accordingly, a cross-sectional design was deemed the most suitable for the study.

Participants were members of a Qualtrics panel (N=557) which is a group chosen from a pre-arranged pool of respondents who have agreed to be contacted by Qualtrics to respond to surveys, enabling the researcher to get higher response rates quickly. The researcher used quota sampling for gender and age to ensure the representativeness of the sample (table available in the study by Akkuş, 2021). While the Qualtrics panel offers a convenient data source, self-selection bias is a concern, as participants may differ from the general population in motivation, panel awareness, internet access, and responsiveness due to survey fatigue or panel incentives, potentially affecting the generalizability of the results.

From the participants who answered (N=557), a number was deleted in the original study (see Akkuş, 2021) leaving the analytical sample of 514 participants; 262 participants from India and 252 from Mexico. This is the version of the data we received and after completing the preliminary analysis, there were 6 people who did not answer any item in the SDO scale and therefore were excluded from the analysis. The analytic sample of the current study consists of 508 participants, 262 of which are from India (128 or 48.9% females) and 252 from Mexico (126 or 50% females). In Table 1, the demographic characteristics of the sample are presented. Given

the fact that the cultural differences between India and Mexico are not central in this research and the subsamples are smaller than 300, we decided to tackle the two samples as one.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristic of Sample (N= 508)

		Total (n)
Gender	Female	252
	Male	256
Age Group	<18	0
	18-22	77
	23-35	178
	36-55	179
	>56	74
Education	≥ elementary school	5
	Secondary/ lower vocational education	42
	Higher vocational education	112
	Academic education	349

Procedure

The researcher asked Qualtrics for 500 participants in total, ranging from 100 to 250 per country. He asked for a nationally representative sample for India and Mexico and quotas on age and gender. The participants in India were compensated 5\$ per complete response and in Mexico 6\$. The surveys were administered in English in India and in Spanish in Mexico. For the Spanish translation a sworn translator from the University of Groningen was used. Participants first completed the Community Collectivism Scale (CCS), the Social Dominance Orientation scale (SDO-7) and the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI). In the original study (Akkuş, 2021), three

scenarios regarding negative treatment of women were also administered but are irrelevant to the present study. The sampling process lasted from the 22nd until the 28th of July 2016.

Ethics

The researcher who handled the primary data received ethical approval from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Behavioral and Social Sciences at the University of Groningen (EC-BSS). For the present study, we submitted our proposal to Utrecht University Student Ethics Review & registration which was also approved. One ethical consideration we should mention is that when asked for gender, respondents had the option to choose only male or female, excluding people who do not identify with the binary gender. Although it is not a common practice in quantitative research, I would like to acknowledge my positionality and potential bias in studying the effect of cultural values on sexism in countries with very different cultures than my own. I recognize the importance of cultural context in interpreting the findings of this study and I will do my best to contextualize the results within the broader socio-cultural landscapes of India and Mexico, avoiding essentialist or reductionist interpretations. The very essence of interdisciplinary research is to analyze every problem within its context and consider multiple factors around a phenomenon and that is how I will try to approach the results of this study.

Instruments

Ambivalent Sexism. The dependent variable consisting of Hostile Sexism ($\alpha = .76$) and Benevolent Sexism ($\alpha = .71$) was measured using the 22-item Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI; $\alpha = .76$; Glick & Fiske, 2001). Of the 22 items, 11 assess hostile sexism (i.e. “Women are too easily offended”) and the other 11 items assess benevolent sexism (i.e. “Women should be cherished and protected by men”) (see Appendix). Responses to items were measured on a Likert

scale, from 1 (totally disagree) to 7 (totally agree), and after recoding reverse-scaled variables, a composite score was calculated for each variable, being the mean of the items, with a higher score indicating higher levels of sexism.

Cultural values. The independent variable is measured with the Community Collectivism Scale ($\alpha = .91$), an intersubjective scale for cultural orientation (Akkuş et al., 2017). The items of the scale can be divided on the dimensions of loyalty, hierarchy, honor and agency, at both the individual level and the community level (15 items each). For example, an item for the dimension loyalty at the personal level, “I would support a family member, even if I wouldn’t want to”, is repeated at the community level as such “In my community, people support their family members, even if they don’t want to”. Based on previous scale validation analyses (Akkuş et al., 2017; 2019), we know the dimensions of loyalty, hierarchy and honor cluster together, whereas agency remains a separate factor. We therefore distinguished the dimensions of (personal and community) collectivism (the mean of loyalty, hierarchy and honor) and (personal and community) agency. The Cronback’s α for personal agency (AI) was .77 and for community agency (AC) was .60. For AC the Cronback’s alpha is not very high, an issue thoroughly discussed in the paper by Akkuş and colleagues (2017). Responses to items were measured on a Likert scale, from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree), and for the factors loyalty, hierarchy and honor, a mean score was computed with higher score indicating higher levels of collectivism. Whereas for the factor agency, higher mean score indicates higher levels of agency.

Social Dominance. The 16-item SDO7 scale (Ho et al., 2015) was used to measure SDO ($\alpha = .91$), with eight items for each of the two subscales, SDO-D (dominance; $\alpha = .93$) and SDO-E (anti-egalitarianism; $\alpha = .92$). Items include “Some groups are simply inferior to other groups” (SDO-D) and “We should work to give all groups a chance to succeed” (SDO-E). Respondents

were asked for which of the statements they had positive or negative feelings towards and responses were measured on a Likert scale, from 1 (very negative) to 7 (very positive). After recoding the SDO-E items and computing mean scores for SDO-D and SDO-E, higher score indicates higher levels of SDO.

Control variables. The control variables that were measured originally were gender, age, highest education degree and marital status. In the current analysis, we controlled for gender, age and educational background. Because we did not divide the sample into two countries, we also included country as a control variable.

Analysis strategy

All analyses were carried out using JASP, version 0.18.3.0. Before performing any of the analyses, we checked the questionnaire for inconsistencies and missing data. New variables were computed for all three scales and the descriptive analysis was performed. Reliability of the scales was checked using Cronbach's alpha. Correlations among the main variables were checked using Pearson's r and the assumptions check was performed. The mediation analyses were conducted using multilevel linear regression analyses, as described by Baron and Kenny (1986).

The first step was to check the effect of the confounders- gender, age, education and country- on Hostile and Benevolent Sexism. Then, while controlling for the confounders, we checked the effect of Agency (AI, AC) on Sexism (HS, BS). We then tested the effect of SDO on AI and AC. Finally, we tested the effect of SDO on HS and BS while controlling for confounders and AI and AC. A mediation is said to occur when the following conditions are met: a) the independent variable is significantly associated with the dependent variable (AI and AC with HS and BS), b) the independent variable is significantly associated with the mediator variable (AI

and AC with SDO), c) the previously established significant relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable is no longer significant (complete mediation), or smaller (partial mediation). Finally, for all statistical analyses a p of up to .05 was considered significant and missing values were deleted listwise as the number of missing values was small.

Results

Descriptive Results

In Table 2 the means and standard deviations of the main variables are presented. Participants scored rather high on agency on a scale from 1 to 5. On a scale from 1 to 7, the mean score of the participants was a bit over the middle of the subscales of Ambivalent Sexism and rather low for Social Dominance Orientation.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of Sample (N=508)

	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Individual Agency	4.60	.59	1.67	5
Collective Agency	4.02	.78	1.33	5
Hostile Sexism	4.01	.92	1	6.64
Benevolent Sexism	4.53	.89	1.55	6.91
Social Dominance Orientation	2.80	1.06	1	5.38

The correlations between the main variables are presented in Table 3. Individual Agency (AI) seems to be negatively correlated with Social Dominance Orientation. Collective Agency (AC) correlates positively with both Hostile and Benevolent Sexism. HS and BS both correlate positively with SDO. Finally, HS and BS correlate with each other and so do AI and AC.

Table 3*Correlations among the main variables (N=508)*

	AI	AC	HS	BS
Individual Agency (AI)	-			
Collective Agency (AC)	.37**	-		
Hostile Sexism (HS)	-.07	.12*	-	
Benevolent Sexism (BS)	.04	.19**	.22**	-
Social Dominance Orientation (SDO)	-.28**	.01	.35**	.21**

Note: * $p < .01$. ** $p < .001$ **Main Analysis**

Before performing the regression analysis, all the assumptions were checked for all models. For the normality of residuals, a visual inspection of the Q-Q plots showed linear patterns for all models, supporting the assumption of normality. The plots of residuals against predicted values did not reveal any systemic nonlinear patterns and showed some variance, suggesting the assumptions of linearity and homoscedasticity were met. The assumption of independence was met due to the way the survey was administered. All VIF values were below 10 with the highest being 1.086, indicating no substantial multicollinearity issues among the variables. There was no Cook's distance higher than 1, indicating there are no outliers that influence the models. The standardized residuals tables for all the models showed some cases where the standardized residual was higher than 3 but in these cases the deviations were very small (Std. Residual Min=-3.41; Std. Residual Max= 3.39). We have continuous dependent variables therefore multiple linear regression analyses have been performed.

The first hypothesis predicted that people with higher levels of Agency, both individual and communal, hold less hostile and benevolent sexist attitudes. For this hypothesis, we examined the relationship between AI and HS (Model 1), AC and HS (Model 2), AI and BS (Model 4) and AC and BS (Model 5). Table 4 shows that there was no significant relationship between AI and HS, $B = -.008$, $SE = .069$, $p = .911$, 95% CI [-0.14, 0.13]. However, AC significantly predicted HS, $B = .136$, $SE = .052$, $p = .009$, 95% CI [0.03, 0.24]. Without the effect of the confounders, AC predicted 1.2% of the variance of HS. Concerning Benevolent Sexism, AI seemed to be a significant predictor, $B = .238$, $SE = .061$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.12, 0.36]. AI explained 2.3% of the variance of BS. Finally, AC and confounders significantly related to BS, $B = .127$, $SE = .047$, $p = .007$, 95% CI [0.04, 0.22]. AC explained 1.1% of the variance of BS. Thus, no support for the first hypothesis was found.

Table 4

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis with Hostile Sexism as Dependent Variable in Models 0, 1 and 2, and Benevolent Sexism as Dependent Variable in Models 3, 4 and 5

	Model 0		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>
Constant	4.3***	.26	4.33***	.38	3.76***	.33	4.37***	.23	3.43***	.34	3.87***	.30
Independent Variables												
AI			-.01	.07					.24***	.06		
AC					.14**	.05					.13**	.05
Control Variables												
Gender	.43***	.08	.43***	.08	.43***	.08	.24***	.07	.27***	.07	.24***	.07
Age Group	-.05	.04	-.05	.04	-.06	.04	.13**	.04	.12**	.04	.12**	.04
Education	-.06	.06	-.06	.06	-.06	.06	-.01	.05	-.04	.05	-.01	.05

Country	-.23*	.08	-.23*	.08	-.18*	.08	-.77***	.07	-.84***	.07	-.72***	.07
R ²	.08		.08		.09		.22		.24		.23	

Note: B = unstandardized coefficients; SE = standard error; * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

The second hypothesis predicted that the negative effect of agency on sexist attitudes is mediated by SDO. The prediction was: the higher the agency, the lower the SDO and the lower the SDO the lower the sexism. The mediation effect is tested in the models presented in Table 5. Only AI had a significant relationship with SDO, $B = -.372$, $SE = .077$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [-0.52, -0.22], with the explained variance of AI on SDO being 3.9%. AC did not significantly predict SDO, $B = -.087$, $SE = .059$, $p = .141$, 95% CI [-0.20, 0.03]. SDO was significantly related to the outcome variable when mediating the relationship between AI and HS, $B = .283$, $SE = .038$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.21, 0.36], AC and HS, $B = .279$, $SE = .037$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.21, 0.35], and AI and BS, $B = .084$, $SE = .036$, $p = .018$, 95% CI [0.01, 0.15]. The variance of HS that SDO explains is considerable. Specifically, when controlling for AI, it explains 9.1% of HS and for AC 9.2%. However, when mediating the relationship between AI and BS the explained variance is very small (0.08%). When including SDO, the effect of AI on HS remains insignificant, $B = .097$, $SE = .067$, $p = .149$, 95% CI [-0.04, 0.23]. Whereas the effects of AC on HS and BS, and of AI on BS remain significant: $B = .161$, $SE = .050$, $p = .001$, 95% CI [0.06, 0.26]; $B = .132$, $SE = .047$, $p = .005$, 95% CI [0.04, 0.22]; $B = .270$, $SE = .062$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.15, 0.39] accordingly. The unstandardized coefficient (B) of AI on BS increased from .238 when examined alone to .270 after including SDO. The indirect effect of AI on BS through SDO was estimated to be -.312, suggesting that SDO partially mediates the relationship. Therefore, the second hypothesis was supported for AI and BS but not for the rest of the models.

Table 5

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis with Social Dominance Orientation as Dependent Variable in Models 6 and 7, Hostile Sexism as Dependent Variable in Models 8 and 9, and Benevolent Sexism as Dependent Variable in Models 10 and 11

	Model 6		Model 7		Model 8		Model 9		Model 10		Model 11	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>
Constant	4.93***	.42	3.79***	.38	2.94***	.41	2.70***	.35	3.01***	.38	3.65***	.33
Independent Variables												
AI	-.37***	.08			.10	.07			.27***	.06		
AC			-.09	.06			.16**	.05			.13**	.05
SDO					.29***	.04	.28***	.04	.08*	.04	.06	.04
Control Variables												
Gender	.19*	.09	.23*	.09	.38***	.08	.37***	.08	.25***	.07	.23**	.07
Age Group	-.02	.05	-.02	.05	-.04	.04	-.05	.04	.12**	.04	.12**	.04
Education	-.04	.07	-.09	.07	-.05	.06	-.04	.06	-.03	.05	.00	.05
Country	-.60***	.09	-.74	.06	-.06	.08	.02	.08	-.78	.08	-.68***	.08
R ²	.16		.13		.17		.18		.25		.23	

Note: *B* = unstandardized coefficients; *SE* = standard error; * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Discussion

Worldwide, women are frequent victims of various types of maltreatment, which often stems from gender inequality and discrimination. The present paper explores the cultural foundations underlying sexist attitudes, aiming to uncover the mechanisms behind them. Specifically, we examined how Community Collectivism and Social Dominance Orientation interact with the two components of Ambivalent Sexism, Hostile and Benevolent Sexism. The results support this idea: the interaction between individual agency, communal agency and social dominance orientation can predict individuals' sexist attitudes in a complex way.

Drawing on previous literature and the idea that agentic individuals are more likely to challenge traditional gender roles, we hypothesized that people high in individual and communal agency would hold fewer sexist attitudes. Our findings, however, revealed a more complex pattern. Individuals high in community agency exhibited both benevolent and hostile sexism, while those high in individual agency only displayed benevolent sexism. Concerning the positive relationship between individual agency and benevolent sexism, our results are in line with the Turkish sample in the study by Akkuş (2021). As for community agency and sexism, to our knowledge, this is the first study to ever explore this relationship.

Due to the lack of empirical research on this specific relationship, we can take a more theoretical approach to explore potential explanations for these findings. The seemingly empowering statements promoting individual responsibility and autonomy (“In my community, you are responsible for the important choices in your life”, “in my community, everyone is responsible for their own life” and “in my community striving for autonomy is considered good”) can connect to both benevolent and hostile sexism depending on the cultural context. This can be seen as in alignment with System Justification Theory, where these statements could be seen as justifying the status quo of gender roles, pressuring women to succeed within the existing system (Jost & Banaji, 1994). Furthermore, we should keep in mind that agency is a value whereas sexism and social dominance are norms. According to Frese (2015), there is a distinction in the level in which they operate: values are inside the person (“I live my values”) whereas norms are perceived to be outside the person (“I conform to the norms”). Therefore, the value of agency is experienced in the context of the norms making their interaction more complex than originally anticipated.

Our second hypothesis proposed that SDO would mediate the negative relationship between agency and sexism. Once again, the results suggest a more complex interaction. Specifically, higher individual agency, which reduced social dominance attitudes, was linked to more benevolent sexism, with the effect of AI being bigger when SDO was mediating the relationship. This suggests the relationship between individual agency and benevolent sexism can indeed be partially explained by SDO. As for individual agency and hostile sexism, they seem to be directly unrelated. However, AI is associated with less SDO, suggesting that agentic individuals might be less likely to endorse social hierarchies and group inequality. This lower SDO, in turn, is linked to lower levels of hostile sexism. In essence, individual agency might not directly reduce hostile sexism, but it could indirectly create a less sexist environment by promoting a sense of agency and reducing the need to endorse social hierarchies. Finally, in line with previous research (Barreto & Doyle, 2023), SDO considerably influenced hostile sexism. Based on Social Dominance Theory we can argue that individuals who advocate for preserving the status quo, might use sexism to maintain social hierarchies by placing the blame for women's lack of success on the women themselves, rather than acknowledging systemic issues (Tilly et al., 2001).

On the other hand, the story of communal agency is even more complex. While high communal agency did not seem to affect SDO, the effect of communal agency on sexism (both hostile and benevolent) when mediated by SDO actually became stronger. Specifically, concerning the relationship with benevolent sexism we can argue that SDO might moderate it. In that case, individuals high in SDO might use their agency to justify sexism, while those low in SDO might be more likely to challenge all forms of sexism through their agency. As for hostile sexism, in this interaction, there could be another variable we did not account for that serves as a

first mediator. Again, we should keep in mind that we are observing interactions between a value (agency) and norms (SDO and sexism). Therefore, they interact with each other in a complex way as they function at different levels. Previous literature reinforces the complexity of these interactions. For instance, postfeminist discourses emphasizing individual agency, meritocracy and natural gender differences can mask inequalities (Jones & Clifton, 2017), while benevolent sexism can make existing structures seem fair (Lachance-Grzela et al., 2021). This can lead women, for example, to accept traditional roles and unbalanced housework, potentially reducing their dissatisfaction with the status quo. These are some examples where norms influence behavior and attitudes in unexpected ways, giving more complex explanations for phenomena than expected.

In conclusion, the influence of individual agency on benevolent sexism and community agency on both types of sexism is stronger when SDO is a mediator meaning that SDO is indeed associated with the existence of sexist attitudes to an extent. While SDO partially mediates the relationship between individual agency and benevolent sexism, the role of SDO in communal agency remains unclear. The troubling findings in our research were that agency, for the most part, was a predictor for sexist attitudes which was unexpected and that although community agency does not affect SDO, its effect on both types of sexism is still bigger when SDO is mediating than when not. This leads us to believe that SDO does in fact influence the relationship between agency and sexist attitudes but in a more complex way than originally anticipated. Future research should explore further how exactly is SDO influencing these relationships.

Strengths and Limitations

The present study is based on a culturally diverse sample- drawn from India and Mexico- which expands our understanding by incorporating perspectives beyond predominantly Western-focused samples. Additionally, it utilizes a fairly new way of measuring cultural values which, although thoroughly tested and validated, has a limited amount of research surrounding it, making our study innovative.

For the limitations, having data from countries where the “gender gap” is relatively high limits the generalizability to such countries. A comparison between this sample and a sample from a country with a lower “gender gap” would be interesting for future research. In addition, this study is limited to the relationship between agency and sexism. A suggestion for future research would be to compare this relationship with the one between (personal and community) collectivism and sexism. In that case, it would be also helpful to use the subscales of SDO to make the analysis more sensitive. The most important suggestion would be to examine SDO as a second mediator or a moderator as its exact role remains unclear.

Conclusions and Implications

The current study investigated the interactions between individual and communal agency, hostile and benevolent sexism, and social dominance orientation. Our findings revealed a particularly interesting result: a positive association between individual agency and benevolent sexism, partially mediated by SDO. This suggests that individuals high in agency who also endorse group hierarchies (high SDO) might be more likely to hold benevolent sexist attitudes. For other relationships, SDO did not appear to be a significant mediator, highlighting the need for further investigation in order to understand the role of SDO.

Disentangling this relationship is crucial; understanding the role social dominance plays in the attainment and maintenance of sexist attitudes can make interventions promoting egalitarianism and challenging group hierarchies particularly effective in tackling ambivalent sexism. By continuing to explore the role of agency and social dominance orientation in shaping sexist attitudes, we can work together to dismantle these systems and create a more just and equitable world for everyone.

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Appendix 1

Reflection on Interdisciplinarity

This study can be considered interdisciplinary work as it draws on concepts from different disciplines. Using theoretical insights from multiple scientific disciplines provides a more comprehensive picture of the problem and the possible solutions. Combining theory and concepts from different fields can improve our understanding of complex social phenomena like sexism. The concepts and the variables we measured come from different disciplines. Sexist attitudes are classically studied in Social Psychology with Allport, Glick and Fiske- whose scale we used- being very central researchers in Social Psychology. Community Collectivism can be considered part of Cultural Psychology, while Social Dominance Orientation is another product of Social Psychology. Therefore, Social Psychology is a very central discipline in this research as it provides the two main variables but also useful theories for interpretation like the Social Dominance Theory and the Ambivalent Sexism Theory. Cultural psychology provides the theory behind Community Collectivism and gives the background on how cultural values affect individual attitudes about oneself, others and the community surrounding them. Of course, sexism can also be argued to “belong” to Gender Studies as well.

As far as insights from stakeholders outside of academia are concerned, the present work was not particularly influenced by non-academic stakeholders. However, the results could be used for designing interventions with different stakeholders. NGOs concerned with gender equality in non-western countries or municipalities and schools looking to minimize the gender gaps could benefit from the results of our research. As for research methods, we opted for a quantitative study design using surveys to measure our variables and statistical analysis to

examine correlations and measure our hypotheses. This was deemed the best way to answer our research question as it makes the results generalizable. However, this study- or future ones- could benefit from a systematic review and meta-analysis on the topic of sexism and possible mediators and moderators as the available literature is vast with various results that should be grouped in order to pinpoint the areas interventions should focus on.

Our research, by default, uses multiple analytical levels to answer the research question. On the individual level, we have the concept of individual agency, which was one of our main variables and measures how much agency the individual feels like he/she has. On the micro level, we can put the community as described by the Community Collectivism Scale because it includes the proximal people to the individual's everyday life (i.e. extended family, friends, neighbors, and close community). At this level, we measured Community Agency which is the agency that the individual believes their community allows them. The concepts of sexism and social dominance orientation are a bit complex to categorize. They are personal attitudes that could be considered as individual level however, as we also argue in the study, they are actually norms formed by the important others and the community (micro-level), their interactions with each other (meso-level) but also the broader societal atmosphere (macro-level). Therefore, it feels limiting to put these constructs in a specific level of analysis. By itself, the fact that the central variables of our study cannot be put in a specific analytical level shows that this problem needs to be examined and tackled in a way that utilizes and considers all analytical levels. That is also how we tried to analyze and approach the problem and why we opted for measures that target different levels of analysis.

Appendix 2

Measurement instruments

Ambivalent Sexism Inventory

Please indicate to what degree you agree with the following statements, by moving the slider to a number from 1 'Totally disagree' to 7 to 'Totally agree'. (The items with the asterisks indicate the need for reverse coding)

1. Women exaggerate problems at work
2. Women are too easily offended
3. Most women interpret innocent remarks as sexist
4. When women lose fairly, they claim discrimination
5. Women seek special favors under guise of equality
6. Feminists are making reasonable demands *
7. Feminists not seeking more power than men*
8. Women seek power by gaining control over men
9. Few women tease men sexually *
10. Once a man commits, she puts him on a tight leash
11. Women fail to appreciate all men do for them
12. A good woman should be set on a pedestal

13. Women should be cherished and protected by men
14. Men should sacrifice to provide for women
15. In a disaster, women need not be rescued first *
16. Women have a superior moral sensibility
17. Women have a quality of purity few men possess
18. Women have a more refined sense of culture, taste
19. Every man ought to have a woman he adores
20. Men are complete without women*
21. Despite accomplishment, men are incomplete without women
22. People are often happy without heterosexual romance*

Community Collectivism Scale

Please state to what degree you agree with the following statements, by moving the slider to a number from 1 'Totally disagree' to 5 to 'Totally agree'.

1. I would consider it a disgrace if there would be gossip about me.
2. Honor is the most important thing for me.
3. I monitor if people (from my community) observe the unwritten rules.
4. I feel responsible for preserving and protecting my family member's honor

5. I am responsible for the important choices in my life.
6. I am responsible for my own life.
7. I consider striving for autonomy as good.
8. I experience the problems of family members as if they were my own problems.
9. My ties with my family are very strong.
10. I would support my family members, even if I wouldn't want to.
11. I will do what I can when a family member needs me.
12. I believe men should have a more important voice than women.
13. My elders' opinions are more important to me than my own opinions are.
14. I think that older people have a higher status than the young.
15. I accept that certain people in my family have more to say than others

The following statements concern your community. We define community as “your core family, your extended family and other families (in your environment) that matter to you”. Please indicate to what degree you agree with the following statements, by moving the slider to a number from 1 ‘Totally disagree’ to 5 to ‘Totally agree’.

16. In my community it is considered a disgrace if there is gossip about you.
17. In my community, honor is the most important thing for people..

18. Our community monitors if people observe the unwritten rules.
19. In my community, members of the family feel responsible for preserving and protecting another family member's honor.
20. In my community, you are responsible for the important choices in your life
21. In my community, everyone is responsible for their own life.
22. In my community striving for autonomy is considered good.
23. In my community people experience the problems of their family members as if they were their own problems.
24. In my community family ties are very strong.
25. People are expected to support their family members, even if they do not want to.
26. In my community you are expected to do what you can when a family member needs you.
27. In my community, it is generally believed that men have a more important voice than women.
28. In my community, your elders' opinions are more important than your own opinions are.
29. In my community people believe that older people have a higher status than the young.
30. In my community you are expected to accept that some people in your family have more to say, and others less.

Social Dominance Orientation

Which of the following objects or statements do you have a positive or negative feeling towards?

Beside each object or statement, slide the ruler to a number from '1' to '7' which represents the degree of your positive or negative feeling.

The numbers 1 to 7 correspond with: very negative (1) , negative (2), slightly negative (3), neither positive nor negative (4), slightly positive (5), positive (6), very positive (7)

1. Some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups.
2. In getting what you want, it is sometimes necessary to use force against other groups.
3. It's OK if some groups have more of a chance in life than others.
4. To get ahead in life, it is sometimes necessary to step on other groups.
5. If certain groups stayed in their place, we would have fewer problems.
6. It's probably a good thing that certain groups are at the top and other groups are at the bottom.
7. Inferior groups should stay in their place.
8. Sometimes other groups must be kept in their place.
9. It would be good if groups could be equal.*
10. Group equality should be our ideal. *
11. All groups should be given an equal chance in life.*

12. We should do what we can to equalize conditions for different groups. *

13. Increased social equality. *

14. We would have fewer problems if we treated people more equally. *

15. We should strive to make incomes as equal as possible. *

16. No one group should dominate in society. *