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Warning about 'benevolent sexism' and men's apparently positive attitudes towards women

January 20th, 2011

Research conducted at the [University of Granada](#) warns about the negative effects of the so-called "benevolent sexism", a term used for apparently "positive" ideas and attitudes of men towards women, which are based on the assumption that men must take care of and sacrifice themselves for women.

The research revealed that when individuals are told that a man has attitudes socially considered as "good" towards his wife -even although those attitudes are sexist- they tend to justify sexual violence within the couple and to exonerate the man (as they consider that he is entitled to have sexual relations with his wife) and to blame the woman (as they consider that it is a woman's duty to sexually satisfy her husband).

The author of this research -which was supervised by professors **Miguel Moya Morales** and **Jesús López Megías**- is **Mercedes Durán Segura**, at the Department of Social Psychology and Behavioural Sciences Methodology of the University of Granada. For the purpose of the study, six experimental studies were conducted, where more than 700 students aged between 18 and 24 and from different Faculties participated. One of such studies was carried out in collaboration with the University of Kent (United Kingdom).

Pioneer Research

The research conducted at the [University of Granada](#) is a world pioneer research: while other studies

only analysed how sexist beliefs affect the judgement that individuals make of rape and rape-victims, this new study also revealed that men's benevolent sexist attitudes towards women are used to justify sexual violence within the couple.

The results obtained from this study "could be applied for designing and enhancing educational programs in sexual harassment prevention mainly for men -with the purpose of reducing sexual harassment rates-, but also for women, to help them become aware of the reality of the problem and help them in identifying what factors could weaken their assertive reactions in such cases".

According to Durán Segura, what is important about this study is that it remarks the negative impact that benevolent sexist attitudes of men towards their couples have on our Society. However, such protection and affection "are not innocent, since men with benevolent sexist attitudes consider women as inferior to men, and that is the reason why they assume that women need their protection and care".

The results drawn from this research were recently and partly published in a special issue of the most important journal in this field, *Sex Roles*, focused on "ambivalent sexism".

Provided by University of Granada

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