

---

**Contest outcome and the origins of sexist attitudes; experiments using video games.**

**Amany Gouda-Vossos, Michael Kasumovic, Barnaby Dixson & Robert Brooks**

**Evolution & Ecology Research Centre, UNSW Australia**

Attitudes towards sex and gender, including sexism, may be shaped by the Darwinian forces of intra-sexual competition and inter-sexual conflict. Contest behaviour is an expression of intra-sexual competition for resources, status and, ultimately, access to potential mates. The dynamics within a contest can also be changed depending on social factors. For example, men display increased aggressive behaviours when competing against other men, particularly when an audience is present. However, the presence of females as competitors and its impact on behaviours has not been fully explored. We recruited 123 participants to play combat video games, giving each the impression that they were playing against either a male or female competitor. We experimentally manipulated contest outcome with the aid of a programmable console, and followed the contest by measuring implicit and explicit sexism, and social dominance orientation. Men exhibited no difference in explicit sexist attitudes between win and loss conditions, but women expressed higher levels of benevolent sexism when they lost to a male competitor. Further, social dominance orientation of both men and women were higher after losing to a female than a male competitor. Additionally, responses in socially dominant attitudes appear to be mediated by sexual experience, with sexually inexperienced men responding with higher social dominance when they lose to a female competitor or beat a male competitor. We interpret the findings in the context of evolved competitive behaviours and sexual conflict theory concerning mating and the attainment of social status.