

When Female Applicants Meet Sexist Interviewers: The Costs of Being a Target of Benevolent Sexism

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Abstract American undergraduate participants ($N=205$) read an interview transcript and then evaluated male interviewers and a female job applicant to investigate perceptions of women who receive benevolent or hostile sexism (relative to non-sexist controls). As predicted, positive evaluations of the male interviewer in the benevolent and hostile sexist conditions negatively predicted participants' hiring decisions—an effect that was fully mediated by low ratings of applicant competence. In accord with ambivalent sexism theory's claim that women who challenge male dominance are not eligible for protective paternalism, participants' hostile sexism scores predicted lower ratings of applicant competence and hireability, but only when the interviewer was a benevolent sexist. Implications for workplace discrimination are discussed.

Keywords Ambivalent sexism · Gender attitudes · Sex discrimination · Employment discrimination

Introduction

A business-savvy woman applies for a high power management position at a large, retail outlet store. She is on guard for overtly sexist or sexual remarks and a hostile work environment, but instead is greeted with paternalistic behavior from her potential boss. He calls her “sweetheart,” mentions that the men who would be working under her could use a little smoothing over from a “nice young lady,” and assures her they would be willing to assist with the more dangerous aspects of

her job. How will perceivers react to this job applicant, as the target of benevolent sexism—a subtle form of discrimination that may seem positive on the surface (Glick and Fiske 2001)? To date, researchers have focused on women's own reactions to being the recipient of benevolent sexism, finding that it circumscribes their aspirations (Moya et al. 2007) and can lead to cognitive performance impairments, either because they are angry (Vescio et al. 2005) or because they doubt their abilities (Dardenne et al. 2007). But how do perceivers react to recipients of benevolent sexism—including a female job applicant? Do they view her as qualified and deserving of the position, or do they view her as incompetent and weak, penalizing her for the sexist treatment she received?

The present research sought to answer these questions by investigating perceptions of a target of benevolent sexism in a job interview context. After pretesting our materials, participants (U.S. undergraduates) read one of three interview transcripts in which the male interviewer acted in a benevolent sexist, hostile sexist, or non-sexist manner. They then reported their favorability toward the male interviewer and evaluated the female job applicant's competence, likeability, and hireability. Because benevolent sexism has been extensively documented in the U.S. (for a review, see Glick and Fiske 2001), as well as cross-culturally (e.g., in 19 countries; Glick et al. 2000; see also Barreto and Ellemers 2005; Moya et al. 2007), it is plausible that individuals may frequently observe women receiving benevolent sexist treatment. Therefore, it is important to investigate how perceptions of a target of benevolent sexism may be affected, particularly in the context of a job interview.

Benevolent and Hostile Sexism

Benevolent and hostile sexism are distinct but psychologically related constructs in that they both support male dominance

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and traditional gender roles. Hostile sexism reflects antipathy toward women who assert their rights or who seek to have power over men and thereby challenge the gender status quo. In contrast, benevolent sexism reflects a paternalistic view of women who gratify men's needs by accepting traditional gender roles; it characterizes women as *wonderful but weak* (Glick and Fiske 1996, 1997; see also Eagly and Mladinic 1989). Although hostile and benevolent sexism may seem like opposite sides of the coin, research has shown that the two beliefs are positively correlated (Glick and Fiske 1996; Glick et al. 2000), and that different types of women may be more likely to elicit one or the other (Glick et al. 1997). Specifically, hostile sexism predicts negative reactions to women who challenge male dominance (e.g., career women and feminists), whereas benevolent sexism predicts positive attitudes toward women who stay within the bounds of traditional gender roles (e.g., homemakers; Glick et al. 1997; see also Hebl et al. 2007; Masser and Abrams 2004). Thus, hostile and benevolent sexism can, and do, coexist within the same individual.

However, benevolent sexism is perhaps more dangerous because it is subtle. Men and women alike can believe themselves to be non-sexist if they feel positively toward traditional women. Indeed, compared with hostile sexism, benevolent sexism is often not viewed as particularly sexist, likely because it characterizes (some) women as wonderful but vulnerable—both deserving of, and in need of, men's protection and provision (Barreto and Ellemers 2005; Kilianski and Rudman 1998; Moya et al. 2007). Thus, benevolent sexism can “masquerade” as putatively positive beliefs toward women when, in fact, it casts them as less capable and independent, compared with men.

This analysis suggests that female applicants who suffer benevolent sexism during a job interview might be at risk for being viewed as incompetent and weak, relative to women who are not subject to sexism. If so, they would likely not be viewed as hireable for managerial roles. To our knowledge, researchers have not yet examined observers' reactions to the targets of benevolent sexism. In fact, perceivers' reactions to targets of hostile sexism are also unknown, but given that benevolent sexism is a more covert form of sexism and likely more ubiquitous, it is particularly important to examine perceptions of female managerial applicants who suffer benevolent sexism at the hands of male interviewers because of its negative implications for gender equality.

The Costs of Benevolent Sexism

Most women can recognize when they are the victims of hostile sexism, but benevolent sexism is much harder to detect (e.g., Kilianski and Rudman 1998; Swim et al. 2001). Because benevolent sexism is often disguised as

chivalrous or even well-mannered behavior, many women may routinely experience this type of sexism without considering its potential costs. However, because benevolent sexism casts women as weak and dependent on men (even while putting them on a pedestal), it likely has a disparaging influence in the minds of observers.

In particular, when a male interviewer treats her with benevolent sexism, a female job applicant may be viewed as incompetent for two distinct reasons. First, patronizing women may undermine their perceived intelligence (just as it diminishes the capabilities of women who suffer it; Dardenne et al. 2007). However, this reaction is likely to be moderated by observers' evaluations of the benevolent sexist. That is, observers who evaluate the interviewer favorably (failing to recognize his subtle sexism) may be particularly prone to rating a female applicant as inept and not hireable for a management position. When perceivers fail to recognize that benevolent sexism is “prejudice in drag—prettied up, but prejudice nonetheless” (Rudman and Glick 2008; p. 303), they will likely assimilate the male interviewer's impression of women as weak and inept. Although benevolent sexists may view a benevolent sexist interviewer favorably, we argue that one does not have to subscribe to benevolent sexist beliefs in order to view a kind, protective (but patronizing) interviewer in a favorable light. Hence, benevolent sexism may be especially dangerous because even non-sexists may be fooled by its seemingly positive exterior.

Second, perceivers who are hostile sexists might show negative reactions to a female applicant being interviewed by a benevolent sexist. A woman who vies for a managerial role challenges male dominance and, for hostile sexists, such women should not benefit from the rewards of benevolent sexism (Glick and Fiske 1997; Glick et al. 1997; Masser and Abrams 2004). As a result, hostile sexists may react negatively toward a female managerial applicant when a male interviewer treats her with velvet gloves. In effect, they may penalize a woman who (in their minds, undeservingly) profits from paternalism.

Finally, viewing a sexist man favorably may have negative repercussions for female targets, regardless of the type of sexism they are subject to. Thus, we predict that individuals who view a hostile sexist interviewer favorably will similarly disparage a female managerial applicant, given that he overtly undermines her qualifications. In other words, career women who are treated with sexism of either stripe from a higher status man are likely to suffer significant consequences, but only from perceivers who condone the treatment she receives. Although hostile sexists should be more likely to evaluate a hostile sexist interviewer favorably, it was an empirical question as to whether observers might be affected by a hostile sexist interviewer, independent of their own level of sexism.

In summary, female recipients of benevolent sexism may suffer low competence and hireability ratings for a management position not just when evaluated by a hostile sexist, but also when evaluated by anyone who views a benevolent sexist interviewer favorably. Because benevolent sexism may seem positive for women, or even just an expression of good manners, it follows that even non-sexist individuals may view a benevolent sexist favorably, leading them to succumb to the benevolent sexist position that women are weak and not suited for managerial roles. Although these predictions follow directly from ambivalent sexism theory (Glick and Fiske 1996, 2001), they have yet to be tested. If supported, the negative consequences of benevolent sexism will be extended to its effects on witnesses, who may penalize female recipients of benevolent sexism for either unwitting or motivated reasons.

Overview of the Present Research

The overall aim was to reveal unique costs of benevolent and hostile sexism for women. To test whether women treated with sexism are penalized by observers, participants read one of three job interview transcripts in which the male interviewer acted in a benevolent sexist, hostile sexist, or non-sexist manner (as conceptualized by Glick and Fiske 1996). The female job applicant was described as competent and experienced, and responded in the exact same manner to each interviewer. Participants' hostile and benevolent sexism were assessed prior to the manipulation, and ratings of the female applicant and male interviewer were assessed after reading the interview transcript. Our specific hypotheses were as follows:

- Hypothesis 1: Participants' favorability ratings of the benevolent sexist interviewer will be negatively associated with ratings of applicant competence and hireability. Because benevolent sexism is subtle, participants' own levels of benevolent sexism should not predict favorability ratings for the benevolent sexist interviewer.
- Hypothesis 2: Participants' favorability ratings of the hostile sexist interviewer will be negatively associated with ratings of applicant competence and hireability. Because hostile sexism is overt, we expected a positive correlation between participants' hostile sexism and liking the hostile sexist interviewer, but whether hostile sexism would moderate the predicted correlations between interviewer favorability and applicant ratings was an empirical question.

Hypothesis 3: In both the benevolent and hostile sexist interviewer conditions, the relationship between interviewer favorability and applicant hireability will be fully mediated by applicant competence. That is, after accounting for competence ratings, the effect of interviewer favorability on hireability will be reduced to nonsignificance, and a Sobel's test will confirm reliable mediation (Baron and Kenny 1986).

Hypothesis 4: In the benevolent sexist interviewer condition, participants' hostile sexism scores will be negatively associated with ratings of the applicant's competence, likeability, and hireability. This would support our prediction that hostile sexists will react negatively to a career woman being treated with protective paternalism.

Finally, consistent with prior research, we expected men and women to differ more in their levels of hostile than benevolent sexism, and that both genders would show correspondence between hostile and benevolent sexism scores (in support of ambivalent sexism theory; Glick and Fiske 1996). However, whether gender differences would emerge in reactions to a female applicant being interviewed by benevolent or hostile sexist men was an empirical question. Based on past research, it was conceivable that women would be more alert to sexism in general than men (Baron et al. 1991; Inman and Baron 1996), or that men and women would not differ in their perceptions of how sexist the interviewers were (Barreto and Ellemers 2005). Because past research has not investigated observers' reactions to a woman's sexist treatment, we made no *a priori* predictions regarding gender differences.

Method

Participants

Two hundred and five U.S. undergraduates (102 women, 103 men) participated in the study as part of an Introductory Psychology course requirement. Racial composition was as follows: White/European (44%), Asian (32%), African American (9%), Hispanic/ Latino (7%), Bi/multi-racial (3%), Other (4%).

Materials

Sexism

The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI) was used to measure sexist beliefs (Glick and Fiske 1996). The ASI contains two

11-item subscales that assess hostile sexism (HS) (e. g., “Many women are actually seeking special favors, such as hiring policies that favor them over men, under the guise of asking for ‘equality’”) and benevolent sexism (BS) (e.g., “Women should be cherished and protected by men.”). Responses were indicated on a scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*), and items were averaged to form the two subscales (HS Cronbach’s $\alpha = .72$, BS Cronbach’s $\alpha = .69$).

Interviewer Manipulation

Participants were given one of three job interview transcripts in which a male manager interviewed a female job applicant. Their names (Bob Ventura, Jennifer Watkins) as well as applicant responses were held constant across conditions. However, interviewer questions and responses were manipulated to describe the interviewer in a hostile sexist, benevolent sexist, or non-sexist manner. Sexist questions were designed to tap all dimensions of hostile and benevolent sexism (HS—dominative paternalism, heterosexual hostility, competitive gender differentiation; BS—protective paternalism, heterosexual intimacy, complementary gender differentiation) based on ambivalent sexism theory (Glick and Fiske 1996) and previous operationalization of the constructs (see Kilianski and Rudman 1998).

Applicant and Interviewer Ratings

Applicant Competence

Participants rated the applicant’s competence with four items, on a scale of 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*). Items were: “How qualified do you think Jennifer is for the job?” “How competent do you think Jennifer is?” “How well do you think Jennifer would be able to complete all the duties of the job?” and “Overall, how would you rate Jennifer’s strength as an applicant?” A mean rating was calculated from the four items, with high scale reliability (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .86$).

Applicant Likeability

Participants indicated how positively they felt about the applicant on two items: “Overall, how would you rate Jennifer as a person?” with responses ranging from 1 (*not at all favorable*) to 7 (*very favorable*) and “How much do you like Jennifer?” with responses ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*). The two items were averaged, demonstrating high scale reliability (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .84$).

Applicant Hireability

Participants were asked to indicate their willingness to hire the applicant (Do you think Jennifer should be hired for the

job?) on a scale of 1 (*absolutely not*) to 7 (*absolutely yes*). We also asked participants to recommend the applicant’s starting salary, if she were hired. An anchor amount was given so that participants could base their salary decision on beliefs about the applicant compared to an average applicant. Specifically, participants read, “The national average starting salary for retail store managers is \$35,000 per year. If hired, what do you think Jennifer’s starting salary should be?” Response choices ranged from 1 (*\$20,000*) to 7 (*\$50,000*), presented in \$5,000 increments. Salary was weakly related to participants’ willingness to hire, $r(203) = .13$, $p < .05$, likely because the dominant response was the anchor amount. Due to this truncated range, we dropped this item from further analyses. Therefore, only participants’ hiring recommendation was used in analyses.

Interviewer Favorability

Participants responded to five items assessing how positively they felt toward the interviewer. Items were “Overall, how would you rate Bob as an interviewer?” “During the interview, was Bob polite and professional?” “During the interview, did Bob ask good questions?” Overall, how would you rate Bob as a person? and “How much do you like Bob?” Responses were indicated on a scale of 1 (*not at all/ not at all favorable*) to 7 (*very much/ very favorable*). These items were averaged to form the interviewer favorability index (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .93$).

Procedure

Participants were recruited for a study concerning interview skills, in which they would evaluate different interviewing techniques and strategies ostensibly “to improve their peers’ post-graduation employment chances.” Upon arrival at the lab, they were given a manila envelope and escorted to a separate cubicle where a computer program privately administered the ASI such that items were randomly presented. At this point, the computer screen displayed instructions for participants to open the manila envelope. The envelope contained a description of a managerial job opening at Costco, a large retail store (see Appendix A). The position was described as requiring masculine capabilities (i.e., financial and disciplinary skills, and safety and security experience) as well as comfort and experience with masculine tasks (i.e., locking up the store alone late at night, overseeing warehouse operations, hiring and firing employees). Below the job explanation was a description of the female job applicant, Jennifer Watkins. Jennifer was portrayed as intelligent (GPA = 3.5) and experienced (4 years retail experience, 2 years managerial experience; see Appendix A). Participants were instructed to read over

the job description and applicant qualifications, and then turn the page to read a transcript of the applicant's job interview. Participants were urged to pay attention to the transcript, as they would be asked to evaluate the performance of the applicant and the interviewer after reading the transcript. The interview transcript contained the experimental manipulation; participants were randomly assigned to receive the hostile sexist, benevolent sexist or non-sexist interview transcript. In each of the three versions of the transcript, applicant responses were held constant. Across conditions, interviewer questions were similar in content, but varied in phrasing (see Appendix B). For example, the non-sexist interviewer said:

Do you have any warehouse experience? At times this job requires familiarity with moving bulk products.

The benevolent sexist interviewer said:

Do you have any warehouse experience? At times this job requires familiarity with moving bulk products. But that can be a little dangerous—the guys would probably be happy to help a nice young lady like you do whatever you need, though.

The hostile sexist interviewer said:

Do you have any warehouse experience? At times this job requires familiarity with moving bulk products. To be frank, it seems like most women simply aren't cut out to manage the warehouse and oversee the use of heavy equipment.

In each case, the applicant answered:

I do not have specific warehouse experience, but I am familiar with moving and distributing large amounts of a product throughout the store. I am sure that I could learn any skills necessary for understanding the protocol employed at Costco warehouses.

Participants then responded to questions pertaining to their perception of the applicant's competence, likeability, and hireability (in that order). Next, they indicated how favorably they felt toward the interviewer. Following completion of all study materials, participants were fully debriefed and thanked for their participation.

Pre-test Results

The interview transcripts were pre-tested using an independent sample of 101 U.S. undergraduate participants (52 women, 49 men). Participants read one of the three transcripts before rating the interviewer on several dimensions (e.g., sexist and offensive) and completing the ASI as they believed the interviewer would. Results of 3 (inter-

viewer condition) \times 2 (participant gender) ANOVAs are shown in Table 1. As intended, the HS interviewer was rated as significantly more sexist, offensive, discriminatory, hostile toward women, and ruder than the BS interviewer, who was rated higher on these traits than the NS interviewer. In addition, the BS and NS interviewers were rated as significantly more caring, kind, and compassionate than the HS interviewer, whereas the NS and BS interviewers did not differ. This suggests that the BS interviewer's sexism was accompanied by a putatively positive view of women, as intended. Finally, and not shown in Table 1, there were marginal main effects for participant gender such that women rated the interviewers as marginally more sexist, offensive, discriminatory, and hostile toward women than did men, $.06 < \text{all } ps < .08$.

Using the same design, we analyzed participants' ratings of how the interviewer would score on the HS and BS scales. For these two analyses, there were no main effects of participant gender, all $F_s(1,95) < 1.85$, $ps > .18$. Table 1 shows that participants believed the HS interviewer would score significantly higher on the hostile sexism subscale than the BS interviewer, who scored significantly higher than the NS interviewer. HS is a unidimensional factor, whereas BS consists of three factors (Glick and Fiske 1996). As seen in Table 1, the BS interviewer had higher Protective Paternalism and Complementary Gender Differentiation scores (e.g., believing that women are purer than men) than the HS and NS interviewers. Because our interviewers said nothing about close relationships, it is not surprising that Heterosexual Intimacy yielded similar scores for the BS and NS interviewers, both of whom scored higher than the HS interviewer.

In summary, the interview transcripts successfully manipulated participants' ratings of the interviewers' sexism. Relative to the NS interviewer, the HS and BS sexist interviewers were viewed as more sexist, and the HS interviewer was rated as more sexist and discriminatory than the BS interviewer.

Main Study Results

Preliminary Analyses

A multivariate analysis simultaneously testing the effects of race and interviewer sexism on ratings of interviewer favorability and applicant competence, likeability, and hireability ratings revealed no significant racial differences, nor did race interact with interviewer condition, all $F_s(5,173) < 1.37$, $ps > .24$. Participants' race also did not influence their HS scores, all $F_s(5,173) < 1.61$, $ps > .16$. Unexpectedly, a marginally significant main effect of participant race emerged on BS scores, $F(5,173) = 2.32$, $p = .05$, however post

Table 1 Results of pre-testing perceptions of Benevolent (BS), Hostile (HS), and Non-Sexist (NS) interviewers.

Interviewer rating	Interviewer condition						F
	BS		HS		NS		
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
Sexist	5.18 _a	1.60	6.24 _b	1.26	2.50 _c	1.69	47.22**
Offensive	4.05 _a	1.99	5.44 _b	1.37	1.61 _c	.88	47.61**
Discriminatory	4.64 _a	1.84	5.94 _b	1.34	2.15 _c	1.38	44.18**
Hostile Toward Women	3.33 _a	1.87	5.59 _b	1.50	2.00 _c	1.49	37.39**
Rude	3.82 _a	1.96	5.53 _b	1.26	1.43 _c	.88	56.18**
Caring	3.97 _a	1.51	2.12 _b	1.12	3.75 _a	1.67	16.81**
Kind	3.72 _a	1.56	2.00 _b	1.07	3.89 _a	1.55	17.70**
Compassionate	3.33 _a	1.66	2.03 _b	1.24	2.96 _a	1.10	7.84**
Hostile Sexism	4.19 _a	.90	4.75 _b	.78	3.45 _c	.64	20.30**
Protective Paternalism ^a	4.28 _a	.80	3.63 _b	.79	3.68 _b	.69	8.02**
Complementary Gender Differentiation ^a	3.86 _a	1.13	2.50 _b	1.04	3.15 _c	1.01	15.17**
Heterosexual Intimacy ^a	3.62 _a	1.07	2.85 _b	1.08	3.78 _a	.84	7.50**

^a Benevolent Sexism subfactor. Means with differing subscripts within each row differ significantly (all $ps < .05$). Interviewer traits were rated on scale of 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much). Participants rated how they thought interviewers would respond to ASI items on a scale of 1 (he would disagree strongly) to 6 (he would agree strongly). *F* values represent the main effect of interview condition for separate 3 (interview condition) \times 2 (participant gender) between-subjects ANOVAs.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

hoc comparisons revealed no significant differences between ethnicities and the effect was atheoretical. We therefore collapsed across this variable for our focal analyses.

Participants' Benevolent and Hostile Sexism

We predicted that men and women would differ in HS scores, but not BS scores, and that for both genders, HS and BS would be positively correlated. Separate 3 (interviewer condition) \times 2 (participant gender) ANOVAs showed the usual gender main effect for HS, $F(1,199)=26.42$, $p < .001$, with men reporting higher levels ($M=3.97$, $SD=.60$) than women ($M=3.51$, $SD=.63$). No effects emerged for BS, all $ps > .26$; men's and women's BS scores were similar ($Ms=4.10$ and 4.00 , $SDs=.68$ and $.64$, respectively). Finally, both genders showed positive correlations between their HS and BS scores; men's $r(101) = .31$, women's $r(100) = .28$, both $ps < .01$.

Preliminary Analysis of Interviewer Favorability

Because we did not make *a priori* predictions regarding gender differences in perceptions of the interviewer, we next explored potential gender differences. Using the same analytic strategy as above, we tested the effects of interviewer condition and participant gender on ratings of interviewer favorability. See Table 2 for means and standard deviations by gender and interviewer condition. Results showed a significant main effect of gender, $F(1,199)=5.19$, $p=.02$, with men reporting greater liking for the interviewers ($M=4.06$, $SD=1.50$) than women ($M=3.81$, $SD=1.68$). A main effect of interviewer condition was also found, $F(2,199)=46.95$, $p < .001$, but the two-way

interaction was negligible, $p=.94$. Participants rated the NS interviewer ($M=5.24$, $SD=1.04$) significantly more favorably than both the HS interviewer ($M=3.44$, $SD=1.57$), $t(131)=7.71$, $p < .001$, and the BS interviewer ($M=3.24$, $SD=1.31$), $t(134)=9.78$, $p < .001$, but the BS and HS interviewers did not differ in how positively they were rated, $p=.42$. Thus, although men viewed the male interviewers more favorably than women, gender did not interact with interviewer condition.

Preliminary Analysis of Applicant Ratings

Our hypotheses did not make *a priori* predictions regarding participant gender effects on the female applicant's ratings. To test for potential effects, we conducted a 3 (interviewer condition) \times 2 (participant gender) MANOVA for ratings of the applicant's competence, likeability, and hireability. Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations. As can be seen, no differences emerged for competence and hireability, all $Fs < 1.86$, $ps > .16$. Not surprisingly, a main effect for gender emerged on likeability, such that women liked the female applicant more than men, $F(1,199)=6.56$, $p=.01$. Unexpectedly, likeability ratings also showed a main effect for interviewer condition, $F(2,199)=5.19$, $p=.006$. When interviewers were sexist, the female applicant was viewed as more likeable than when the interviewer was non-sexist, BS/NS $t(134)=2.53$, $p=.01$; HS/NS $t(131)=2.43$, $p=.02$. In contrast, the sexist conditions did not differ, BS/HS $t(139)=.17$, $p=.87$. In each analysis, the two-way interaction was weak, all $Fs(2,199) < 1.51$, $ps > .23$. The absence of interaction effects suggested we should collapse across participant gender for our focal mediator tests within each interviewer condition.

Table 2 Means and standard deviations for male interviewer and female applicant ratings, by gender and interviewer condition.

	Women		Men		Gender differences	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Interviewer Favorability						
Benevolent Sexist ^a	2.99	1.45	3.42	1.19	-1.38	.17
Hostile Sexist ^b	3.20	1.60	3.70	1.52	-1.33	.19
Non-Sexist ^c	5.09	1.09	5.44	.95	-1.32	.19
Applicant Competence						
Benevolent Sexist	5.88	.81	5.68	.77	1.05	.30
Hostile Sexist	5.88	.82	5.77	.85	.58	.57
Non-Sexist	5.63	.72	5.49	1.12	.58	.56
Applicant Likeability						
Benevolent Sexist	6.28	.80	5.65	.93	3.00	.00
Hostile Sexist	5.96	.86	5.82	.87	.67	.50
Non-Sexist	5.60	.79	5.39	1.14	.85	.40
Applicant Hireability						
Benevolent Sexist	5.67	1.30	5.62	1.29	.15	.88
Hostile Sexist	5.97	.77	5.76	1.03	.98	.33
Non-Sexist	5.64	.96	5.57	1.60	.21	.84

All interviewer and applicant ratings were on a scale of 1 to 7.

^a *N*s=30 women, 42 men.

^b *N*s=36 women, 33 men.

^c *N*s=36 women, 28 men.

Applicant Ratings as a Function of Interviewer Favorability

Hypothesis 1 predicted that favorable impressions of a BS interviewer would be negatively associated with the perceived competence and hireability of female applicants. Hypothesis 2 predicted the same pattern in the HS interviewer condition. Table 3 shows the results for the full sample, and Table 4 presents the results separately for men and women (because men reported greater liking for the sexist interviewers than women). In accord with our hypotheses, in both the BS and HS interviewer conditions, the more participants liked the interviewer, the lower they rated the applicant's competence and hireability. By contrast, in the NS interviewer condition, interviewer favorability was not associated with perceived competence or hireability. This suggests that the male interviewer's sexism had a negative impact on equal opportunity for the female managerial applicant. Not surprisingly, in all three conditions, applicant's perceived competence and likeability significantly predicted participants' willingness to hire her. In our next analyses, we tested our predictions that people who liked the sexist interviewers would rate the female applicant as less hireable *because* they perceived her to be less competent.

Mediation Analyses

Hypothesis 3 predicted that the applicant's competence would fully mediate the negative relationship between liking the BS interviewer and hiring recommendations. The identical pattern was predicted for the HS interviewer

condition. To test this hypothesis, we standardized all variables and followed procedures outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986). Figure 1 shows the results for the BS interviewer condition (top half) and the HS interviewer condition (bottom half). As can be seen, our predictions were supported. In each condition, after accounting for applicant competence, the relationship between interviewer favorability and applicant hireability was reduced to non-significance, whereas competence remained a strong predictor of hireability. Sobel's (1982) tests confirmed reliable

Table 3 Full sample correlations among dependent variables by interviewer condition.

	Applicant ratings		
	Competence	Likeability	Hireability
Benevolent Sexist Interviewer			
Likeability	.45**	–	
Hireability	.59**	.24*	–
Interviewer Favorability	-.47**	-.32**	-.32**
Hostile Sexist Interviewer			
Likeability	.52**	–	
Hireability	.83**	.56**	–
Interviewer Favorability	-.38**	-.02	-.35**
Non-Sexist Interviewer			
Likeability	.49**	–	
Hireability	.91**	.40**	–
Interviewer Favorability	.16	.31**	.06

p*<.05, *p*<.01.

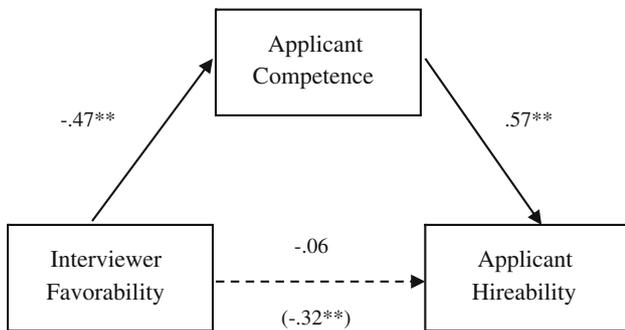
Table 4 Correlations among dependent variables by interviewer condition and participant gender.

	Applicant ratings			
	Competence	Likeability	Hireability	Int. favorability
Benevolent Sexist Interviewer				
Competence	–	.17	.62**	–.53**
Likeability	.60**	–	–.02	–.22
Hireability	.58**	.41*	–	–.40*
Interviewer Favorability	–.40*	–.35*	–.26	–
Hostile Sexist Interviewer				
Competence	–	.58**	.79**	–.49**
Likeability	.44*	–	.67**	–.18
Hireability	.88**	.47**	–	–.49**
Interviewer Favorability	–.25	.18	–.22	–
Non-Sexist Interviewer				
Competence	–	.49**	.83**	–.02
Likeability	.48**	–	.41*	.25
Hireability	.95**	.39*	–	–.15
Interviewer Favorability	.37	.44*	.27	–

Women’s correlations ($N=102$) are presented above the diagonal, men’s correlations are presented below the diagonal ($N=103$).

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Benevolent Sexist Interviewer



Hostile Sexist Interviewer

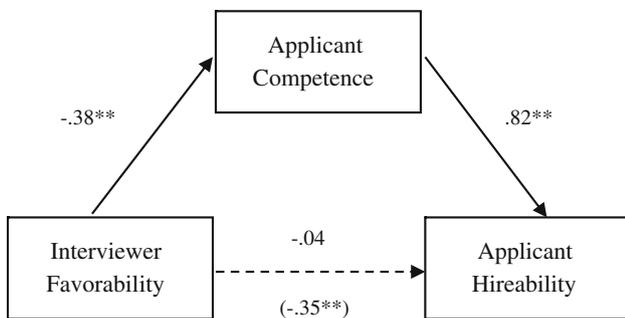


Fig. 1 Mediation analyses of the relationship between interviewer favorability and applicant hireability by applicant competence, presented separately for BS and HS interviewer conditions. Standardized regression coefficients are presented. *Dashed lines* indicate fully mediated paths. ** $p < .01$.

mediation in each case (BS interviewer condition $z = 6.30$, $p < .001$; HS interviewer condition $z = 3.27$, $p < .001$). Thus, the more participants liked the sexist interviewer, the less competent they viewed the applicant, and as a result, the less likely they were to hire her. As noted previously, this pattern did not emerge in the NS interviewer condition, where there was no correspondence between liking the interviewer and willingness to hire the applicant (or her competence; see Table 3).

Does Participant Sexism Moderate the Effect of Interviewer Favorability on Applicant Ratings?

Hypothesis 1 stated that liking for the BS interviewer would be independent of participants’ BS scores because protective paternalism masquerades as good manners (i.e., “gentlemanly” behavior). To test this prediction, we followed recommended procedures (Glick and Fiske 1996) by examining partial correlations of BS (controlling for HS) with applicant ratings, separately for each condition (partial correlations provide a purer measure of HS and BS). Because men showed higher HS scores than women, we also controlled for gender. Supporting Hypothesis 1, Table 5 (top row) shows that participants’ BS scores did not predict interviewer favorability ratings in any of the three conditions. Hypothesis 2 predicted that HS participants would favor the HS interviewer, but left the question of moderation of applicant ratings by participants’ level of HS open. Table 5 reveals that hostile sexists were particularly likely to view the HS interviewer favorably. Therefore, we checked on whether participants’ HS scores might moderate

Table 5 Partial correlations of participants' Hostile Sexism (HS) and Benevolent Sexism (BS) on all dependent variables by interviewer condition.

	Interviewer condition					
	Benevolent sexist		Hostile sexist		Non-sexist	
	HS	BS	HS	BS	HS	BS
Interviewer Favorability	.21	-.06	.36**	-.12	.24	.00
Applicant Competence	-.30*	.14	-.18	.04	.07	.18
Applicant Likeability	-.11	.19	-.09	.27*	.18	.02
Applicant Hireability	-.34**	.07	-.18	.04	.00	.11

Correlations are second order, controlling for gender and for BS when HS is involved, and HS when BS is involved.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

the relationship between interviewer favorability and applicant's perceived competence or hireability.

In the HS interviewer condition, after regressing applicant competence on participants' HS scores (controlling for BS scores and gender), interviewer favorability, and their interaction, we found only a main effect for interviewer favorability, consistent with Table 3 ($\beta = -.36$, $p < .01$). The interaction effect was weak, $\beta = .05$, $p = .70$. The same pattern emerged for hireability, with only a main effect for interviewer favorability, $\beta = -.32$, $p = .01$, and a nonsignificant interaction term, $\beta = .06$, $p = .61$.

In the BS interviewer condition, when predicting ratings of applicant competence we found a marginal effect for HS, $\beta = -.29$, $p = .02$, and the reliable effect for interviewer favorability already seen in Table 3, $\beta = -.41$, $p < .001$. The interaction term was negligible, $\beta = .01$, $p = .92$. The same pattern emerged for hireability; there was a significant effect for HS, $\beta = -.31$, $p = .02$, a reliable effect for interviewer favorability, $\beta = -.27$, $p = .02$, and the interaction term was negligible, $\beta = -.01$, $p = .92$. The pattern for all four regressions was virtually the same whether we controlled for BS scores and gender or not. As a result, we conclude that the effects of participants' favorability toward sexist interviewers on the female applicant's competence and hireability ratings were independent of participants' HS scores.

Applicant Ratings as a Function of Participants' HS and Interviewer's Sexism

Hypothesis 4 states that in the BS interviewer condition, participants' HS scores would be negatively associated with the female applicant's ratings. In other words, hostile sexists would penalize a career woman when she was treated with paternalism—a putative reward reserved only for traditional women, not women who seek powerful roles (Glick and Fiske 1997). Table 5 shows results that support this prediction. Participants' HS scores (after controlling for BS and participant gender) negatively correlated with the applicant's perceived competence and hireability in the BS interviewer condition. In the HS interviewer condition, HS scores were negatively but unreliably correlated with

ratings of the female applicant, providing some discriminant validity for Hypothesis 4. That is, HS does not simply lead to negative evaluations of all female job applicants, only those who are (undeservingly) the beneficiary of paternalism. In the NS interviewer condition, participants' HS scores were not reliably correlated with ratings of the applicant. Indeed, participants' HS scores were greatly weakened as a predictor of applicant ratings when the interviewer was non-sexist. This illustrates a benefit for women when they are treated fairly by a male interviewer, and provides further discriminant validity for Hypothesis 4.

Finally, Table 5 shows the relationships between participants' BS scores and applicant ratings, which were not significant in any condition, with one exception. Participants high on BS liked the applicant more when she was interviewed by the HS interviewer, plausibly as a means of protecting her from his hostile treatment. Notably, this protection did not translate to rating her as higher in competence or hireability.

In sum, Table 5 reveals a pattern that supports our prediction that hostile sexists would respond negatively to a career woman who (in their minds) inappropriately receives benevolent sexism from men. The negative correlations observed between participants' HS and the applicant's competence and hireability in the BS interviewer condition were weakened to nonsignificance in the HS interviewer condition, and did not appear at all in the NS interviewer condition. Thus, a man's benevolently sexist treatment of a female applicant "unleashed" the negative effects of HS, whereas the NS interviewer removed these effects.

Revisiting Mediation Hypotheses

Support for Hypothesis 4 suggested that we should adjust for HS when testing Hypothesis 3, the mediation hypotheses in the BS interviewer condition. Because men's HS scores were higher than women's, we also controlled for participant gender. To revisit Hypothesis 3, we regressed hireability on interviewer favorability while controlling for participants' gender and HS in Step 1. Results showed only the known negative effects of HS, $\beta = -.30$, $p < .05$, and interviewer favorability, $\beta = -.27$, $p < .05$; there was no

reliable effect for gender, $\beta = -.15$, *ns*. After accounting for competence in Step 2, the two significant relationships were reduced, HS $\beta = -.10$, interviewer favorability $\beta = .05$, *ns*, whereas the effect of competence remained robust, $\beta = .78$, $p < .001$. A Sobel's test confirmed reliable mediation, $z = 3.57$, $p < .001$. These findings were virtually identical to those shown in the top half of Fig. 1 even when we controlled for participants' HS and gender.

We conducted the same analysis in the HS interviewer condition. Results in Step 1 revealed the known negative effect of interviewer favorability on hireability, $\beta = -.32$, $p < .05$, but no effect of participants' HS, $\beta = -.06$, *ns*, or gender, $\beta = .05$, *ns*. In Step 2, the effect of interviewer favorability was reduced to $\beta = .003$, *ns*, after accounting for competence, which remained a robust predictor, $\beta = .89$, $p < .001$. A Sobel's test confirmed reliable mediation, $z = 2.89$, $p < .01$. These findings echo the results shown in the bottom half of Fig. 1.

In summary, the mediation hypotheses were upheld despite adjusting for participants' HS and gender, suggesting that people who liked the sexist interviewers assimilated their low opinion of the female applicant's competence which, in turn, led to low hiring recommendations.

Discussion

The present study investigated the costs to female recipients of BS and HS in a job interview context. Consistent with our predictions, participants who viewed BS or HS interviewers favorably also perceived the female applicant to be less competent and therefore, less deserving of the job. These findings present a challenge to gender equality in the workplace. The more a sexist boss is liked by coworkers and upper level management, the less competent female employees may seem as a result of his sexist treatment. Because BS is often not viewed as sexist (Barreto and Ellemers 2005; Kilianski and Rudman 1998), and in some cases is viewed as positive, chivalrous behavior (Moya et al. 2007; Viki et al. 2003), it is plausible that benevolent sexists are often viewed more favorably than hostile sexists, as was the case in the present study. As a result, women may be especially vulnerable when targeted for BS because the perpetrator is often viewed positively, even though his treatment can undermine female recipients. Consistent with this view, women who seek redress for sex discrimination are not likely to succeed when the sexism is wrapped in a paternalistic package (*Weinstock v. Columbia University* 2000; see Rudman et al. 2007). As seen in the present study, liking the BS interviewer was independent of participants' own BS scores. Further, although participants' HS predicted liking the HS interviewer, results showed that the relationship between liking the sexist interviewer and rating the applicant poorly was independent

of participants' sexism scores. Therefore, women in the workplace may be at risk for negative evaluation by those who observe them as the targets of BS or HS, independent of observers' own sexist beliefs.

Nonetheless, observers' sexist beliefs played a role in the applicant's outcomes. Consistent with Hypothesis 4, hostile sexists reacted negatively to a woman who was interviewed by a BS interviewer, rating her as low on competence and hireability. That is, HS particularly provoked harsh ratings when the male interviewer treated the female applicant with protective paternalism that, for hostile sexists, is unwarranted for career women. However, when interviewed by a HS interviewer, the effects of participants' HS were nonsignificant, and when interviewed by a NS interviewer, the pattern did not appear at all. Thus, participants' HS was "unleashed" when observing a BS interviewer and "caged" when observing a NS interviewer. To our knowledge, these are the first findings to demonstrate that hostile sexists respond to men's BS in a manner that penalizes female recipients. As such, they expose a unique dynamic between HS and BS that undermines equal opportunity for women and highlights the dangers of BS in the workplace.

Although HS and BS are distinct constructs, the present study underscores that they act in concert to promote adherence to traditional gender norms. Prior research has shown that participants' BS scores do not predict evaluations of a female job candidate (Masser and Abrams 2004), and in the present study, participants' BS scores (with HS partialled out) did not predict evaluations of the female applicant's competence or hireability. However, these results should not be understood as implying that BS is not detrimental to women. In the present study, exposure to a BS interviewer allowed participants' own HS to surface and punish the female applicant via low ratings of competence and hireability. And more generally, liking for the BS interviewer negatively impacted the female applicant's competence and hireability ratings.

Limitations and Future Directions

We have argued that hostile sexists penalize a female recipient of BS when she challenges male dominance because they are motivated to reserve chivalry for women who fulfill traditional roles. Future research should pursue this motivational mechanism more directly by including a condition in which a traditional woman receives BS, and by probing the reasons for observers' ratings. If our argument is correct, hostile sexists should resent professional women who (undeservingly) receive male chivalry, while approving of traditional women who (appropriately) receive it.

Future research should also move beyond the job interview context to examine the effect of BS in other aspects of employment. Given that women often endorse

BS to avoid HS (Fischer 2006; Glick et al. 2000), at least some women may attempt to elicit BS from their high-powered male superiors, which may hinder their careers in unforeseen ways. For example, are recipients of BS less likely to be promoted or given responsibility at work? How do coworkers view a woman who is the repeated target of BS from a male boss? The present findings suggest that they may disparage her competence, and if hostile sexists resent her, they may actively attempt to prevent her success.

It is important to note that the current study utilized an undergraduate sample. We do not know whether the effects of sexist treatment on observers would be more or less severe in a sample of older, employed adults. It is also possible that sexist treatment is particularly pernicious in certain types of paid employment; for example, it may have more of an impact in masculine than feminine-typed jobs.

Research has shown that BS leads women to underperform on cognitive tasks (Dardenne et al. 2007; Vescio et al. 2005), but what is the impact of BS on women's social behavior or feelings of self-worth? Twenty-five years ago, before the concept of BS was developed, researchers exposed female participants to a male chauvinist interviewer and observed their behavior (von Baeyer et al. 1981). When expecting to meet a chauvinist (defined similarly to a hostile sexist), women presented themselves in a more feminine manner, in terms of their verbal and nonverbal gestures as well as physical appearance. Today, with HS and BS clearly delineated, researchers should examine differential responses by women to HS and BS treatment at the hands of male superiors.

Conclusion

The present study demonstrates unique negative consequences for women who suffer BS in the workplace. When female applicants meet BS male interviewers, perceivers may jeopardize their outcomes in two main ways. First, viewing the interviewer favorably leads to perceiving the victim as less competent and less deserving of the job. Witnesses do not have to be sexist themselves to assimilate a benevolent sexist's low opinion of a woman's professional qualities, underscoring the danger of subtle sexism. Second, BS can exacerbate hostile sexists' inclination to punish women for violating traditional gender norms, plausibly because they feel that women who challenge male dominance are undeserving of protective paternalism. Thus, there are at least two routes by which observing BS harms women in the workplace and thereby impinges on gender equality.

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Appendix A

Job Description:

The following ad was placed on a job-search website:

Costco, a large national retailer of wholesale and bargain merchandise, is looking for new store managers for several of its East Coast stores. Responsibilities include managing store finances and overseeing payroll, hiring and training of sales associates, implementing safety and security practices, maintaining company standards for freight processing and merchandise presentation, handling employee disciplinary issues, and overseeing daily operations. Applicants should be motivated individuals with prior retail experience. A bachelor's degree is preferred. Must be comfortable with completing late night inventory and locking up the store after closing. Warehouse experience a plus (forklift operations, etc.).

Job Applicant:

Jennifer Watkins

B.A. (2007) Rutgers University

GPA: 3.5

2 years sales associate experience, Macy's Department Store

2 years assistant manager experience, Macy's Department Store

Appendix B: Interview Transcript

NS Interviewer: Hello, Ms. Watkins, come on in. My name is Bob Ventura and I'm the director of hiring here at this Costco branch. You can have a seat right there.

BS Interviewer: Hello there, Miss Watkins, come on in. My name is Bob Ventura and I'm the director of hiring here at this Costco branch. Let me get you a seat.

HS Interviewer: Please come in and take a seat. My name is Bob Ventura and I'm the director of hiring here at this Costco branch. Go ahead and sit right there.

Jennifer: It's nice to meet you. Thank you for agreeing to meet with me today.

NS Interviewer: Nice to meet you too. Ok, let's get started. First, why are you interested in becoming the store manager for Costco?

BS Interviewer: Very nice to meet you too, sweetheart. Ok, let's get started. First, why are you interested in becoming the store manager for Costco? Are you sure you want this kind of job—because it can be tough on a young lady.

HS Interviewer: Nice to meet you too. Ok, let's get started. First, why are you interested in becoming the store manager for Costco? Why would a woman want to work in this environment?

Jennifer: Well, I've spent the last 4 years working part time and summers at Macy's, and now I'd like to broaden my experiences and work for a company that sells a wider variety of products and reaches a large customer base.

NS Interviewer: Right—I see that you have a good deal of retail experience. That's good. But Macy's is a very different type of store. At Costco, we don't care as much about presentation, but instead we focus on getting bulk products out onto the selling floor, and that cuts costs for our customers.

BS Interviewer: Right—I see that you have a lot of retail experience. That's good. But Macy's is a very different type of store, you know. At Costco, a lady's interior design skills are wasted. We just focus on getting bulk products out onto the selling floor, so that we can cut costs for our customers. Maybe you wouldn't like not being able to use all of your artistic skills.

HS Interviewer: Right—I see that you have some retail experience. But Macy's is a very different type of store. At Costco, we don't care about presentation. We focus on getting our guys to quickly load up the selling floor with products. That's how we cut costs for our customers. I question whether a woman can be as efficient at getting things done in this kind of environment.

Jennifer: Yes, I realize Costco is different from Macy's, and I am fully prepared to make that transition. I have been a member of Costco for years, so I know that the store is not as fancy or showy as a department store. I like the practice of focusing more on the customer's needs and less on displaying the products.

NS Interviewer: This position involves overseeing employees as well as hiring and firing sales associates. Are you qualified to hold that authority?

BS Interviewer: This position involves overseeing employees as well as hiring and firing sales associates. Are you qualified to hold that authority? We have a lot of men working here in the store and the warehouse, and they could use a woman around to smooth out their rough edges.

HS Interviewer: This position involves overseeing employees as well as hiring and firing sales associates. Are you more qualified to hold that authority than the men already working here? In the past, we've had trouble with women managers getting overly offended by some of the comments the guys around here make.

Jennifer: Yes, I think I am. As assistant manager at Macy's I managed several sales associates and even got to sit in on interviews sometimes. So I think I am ready to take the next step and fully handle hiring decisions, and employee disciplinary actions if need be.

NS Interviewer: Do you have any warehouse experience? At times this job requires familiarity with moving bulk products.

BS Interviewer: Do you have any warehouse experience? At times this job requires familiarity with moving bulk products. But that can be a little dangerous—the guys would probably be happy to help a nice young lady like you do whatever you need, though.

HS Interviewer: Do you have any warehouse experience? At times this job requires familiarity with moving bulk products. To be frank, it seems like most women simply aren't cut out to manage the warehouse and oversee the use of heavy equipment.

Jennifer: I do not have specific warehouse experience, but I am familiar with moving and distributing large amounts of a product throughout the store. I am sure that I could learn any skills necessary for understanding the protocol employed at Costco warehouses.

NS Interviewer: Ok, great. Lastly, I need to know if you're comfortable opening and closing the store. We haven't had much trouble with crime, but it can make some people scared to be the last one in a parking lot late at night. Of course one of the security officers would accompany you.

BS Interviewer: Ok, great. Lastly, I need to know if you're comfortable opening and closing the store. We haven't had much trouble with crime, but to be honest I'm not sure that I feel comfortable assigning a woman to be the last one in a parking lot late at night. Of course one of the security officers would accompany you, but I don't want you to feel scared.

HS Interviewer: Lastly, I need to know if you're comfortable opening and closing the store. We haven't had much trouble with crime, but I know a woman might be scared to be the last one in a parking lot late at night. I don't want to have to take a security guard off his regular post just to escort you because you're scared.

Jennifer: Although I don't think it would be my favorite part of the job, I think that I would be able to handle that responsibility.

NS Interviewer: Well Ms. Watkins, thank you very much for coming in today. We have a couple more candidates to interview, but I'll be in touch in a few days.

BS Interviewer: Well honey, thank you very much for coming in today. We have a couple more candidates to interview, but I'll be in touch in a few days.

HS Interviewer: Well, thanks for coming in today. We have a couple more guys to interview, but I'll be in touch in a few days.

Jennifer: Thanks for the opportunity. Have a good day.

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