

Wanting It Both Ways: Do Women Approve of Benevolent Sexism?¹

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An oft-expressed criticism of feminism is that women "want it both ways," opposing what Glick and Fiske (1996) have called "hostile sexism," but accepting or approving of "benevolent sexism." To examine this issue, an ethnically and socioeconomically diverse group of one hundred female undergraduate volunteers rated profiles of a hostile sexist, a benevolent sexist and a non-sexist. For the benevolent sexist, ratings were mildly favorable, while for the hostile sexist, ratings were highly unfavorable. Forty-four participants (a category referred to as equivocal egalitarians) approved of the benevolent sexist while disapproving of the hostile sexist. Equivocal egalitarianism was positively related to participants' Attitudes About Reality (Unger, Draper, & Pendergrass, 1986) and negatively related to their belief that hostile and benevolent sexism could coexist. Overall, participants considered it unlikely that the hostile and benevolent sexist profiles described the same person. Given previous findings, these data suggest that women may underestimate the coexistence of hostile and benevolent sexism in men (Glick & Fiske, 1996).

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Glick and Fiske (1996) have developed a model of sexism as an ambivalent phenomenon, in which both hostile and benevolent beliefs about women tend to coexist. The instrument they developed to assess this model, the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI; Glick & Fiske, 1996), provided support for this conception in their original study. Across their three largest samples, positive correlations (between .40 and .55) were found between hostile and benevolent subscale scores for both male and female student respondents.

Under Glick and Fiske's (1996) model, hostile sexism encompasses a wide range of negative affect (e.g., antipathy, resentment, anger, etc.) toward women based on three underlying sources. *Dominative paternalism* comprises a desire to dominate and control women, and an inclination to view them as childlike. *Competitive gender differentiation* encompasses a tendency to perceive, magnify, and generalize differences between the sexes and to devalue women. *Hostile heterosexuality* includes viewing sex as a resource, with women in the role of adversarial "gatekeepers," and anger at women for using sexual attraction to manipulate or "toy with" men.

Analogous to its hostile counterpart, benevolent sexism is described as originating from three fundamental sources. *Protective paternalism* includes the desire to protect, to help and to cherish women (as a parent might feel toward a child). *Complementary gender differentiation* involves the predisposition to magnify and emphasize differences between men and women, but in a way that favors women. *Heterosexual intimacy* comprises powerful feelings of personal need, intense affection and longing for, and a highly admiring or worshipful view of women. Thus, benevolent sexism involves favorable stereotypic beliefs regarding women—for example, their greater capacity for nurturance, sensitivity, compassion, and caring, and their superior morality or esthetic sensibility (see also Eagly & Mladinic, 1989; Eagly, Mladinic & Otto, 1991). On the surface these beliefs may seem "pro-female" but because they perpetuate gender stereotypes, their long term consequences may be anything but benevolent.

The notion that benevolent and hostile sexism can coexist in the same individual and that, in fact, they are likely to do so, seems counterintuitive. To the extent that one harbors hostility toward a group, benevolence should be precluded, and vice-versa. This covariation, then, is an important discovery. The positive correlation between hostile and benevolent sexism in men has also been confirmed in more recent studies as well (Glick, Diebold, Bailey-Werner, & Zhu, 1997; O'Neill, 1997; Rudman, Greenwald, & McGhee, 1997).³

Conceiving of sexism as composed of both hostile and benevolent aspects may help to explain its resistance to society's efforts to eliminate it.

³The cited studies were conducted with college-age men only. Glick and Fiske (1996) did not find a positive correlation with smaller samples of older men in their original research.

In addition to the well-known social-cognitive biases that maintain stereotypical thinking and prejudicial belief systems (Fiske & Taylor, 1991), acceptance and encouragement of benevolent sexism may also foster hostile sexism given their positive correlation (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Moreover, a compelling issue is whether women unwittingly sustain ambivalent sexism by responding favorably to its benevolent manifestations.

Men's expressed attitudes toward women (at least those in college-age samples) have become progressively more egalitarian since the 1970s (Spence & Hahn, 1997; Twenge, 1997). However, although overt, blatantly discriminatory beliefs have waned, "modern sexism" comprising insensitivity to gender discrimination and opposition to remedies designed to ensure gender equality, has remained relatively robust (Swim, Aiken, Hall, & Hunter, 1995; Swim & Cohen, 1997). Men frequently express support for equality as an abstract principle, but are often opposed to or at least ambivalent toward actual egalitarian behaviors such as assuming responsibility for domestic and child-rearing chores (Sigel, 1996). Clearly, a good deal of tension and confusion exists within men vis-à-vis the meaning of gender equality, the appropriate means to achieve it, and its impact upon their lives.

This tension and confusion surfaces recurrently in the literature of the "men's liberation movement." Many of its contemporary spokespersons contend that women (especially feminists) have been loath to address cultural and institutional inequities that favor women at the expense of men including exemption from military conscription and combat duty, and inequalities in child custody and divorce settlement rulings (Baber, 1992; Farrell, 1993; Goldberg, 1991). It has been asserted that the women's movement has spawned a generation of bearers of a new double standard, one that zealously protects women from men's offenses (e.g., sexual harassment and spousal violence) while ignoring or underestimating men's risk as victims of such transgressions (Thomas, 1993). Many men perceive themselves as targets of reverse gender discrimination and conflicting demands (Skjei & Rabkin, 1981). Phrased in the terms of the ambivalent sexism model, men assert that women wish to enjoy the benefits of benevolent sexism while dispensing with the costs of hostile sexism, prompting the question that repeatedly emerges in much of this literature, "What do women want from men?" Implicit in that question is the belief that women are somehow pursuing conflicting goals with respect to gender equality.

Whether this is myth or whether some women do, in fact, "want it both ways," was the first issue addressed by this study. If the latter is the case, some women might show approval toward a benevolent sexist while disapproving of a hostile sexist. These *equivocal egalitarians*, at least according to the aforementioned representatives of the men's movement, appear to be in favor of inequality, as long as they are its beneficiaries. They disapprove of

inequality only when they are disadvantaged by it. However, if the “wanting it both ways” assertion is false, women should approve of neither hostile nor benevolent sexism. These *unequivocal egalitarians* should be consistently in favor of equality, even if it entails a loss of some “advantages.”

Glick and Fiske (1996) provided some indirect empirical evidence for the existence of equivocal egalitarianism. First, female respondents exhibited greater agreement with benevolent sexist belief statements than with hostile sexist beliefs. Second, although women were less likely to agree with benevolent sexist belief statements than were men (as revealed by their lower mean ASI-Benevolent scores), the difference was not as large as the male-female difference on the ASI-Hostile subscale. These data did not, nor were they intended to, resolve the question of how women react to benevolent sexist beliefs *in men*, but the results did suggest that at least some women might evaluate a benevolent sexist man favorably, while evaluating a hostile sexist unfavorably. Hence, the initial question posed by this study: “Do women simultaneously approve of a benevolent sexist and disapprove of a hostile sexist?” In other words, do some women “want it both ways”?

Assuming that the answer to this question was affirmative, a second objective was to identify factors that might predict this equivocal egalitarianism in women. Three possibilities were examined: (1) an implicit personality theory (Bruner & Taguiri, 1954) that construed hostile and benevolent sexism as unrelated or inversely related “traits”; (2) traditional life goals that were consistent with or were directly dependent upon benevolent sexism in men; and (3) a more positivist personal epistemology (Unger, Draper & Pendergrass, 1986); that is, a set of convictions about reality that tends to support a belief in traditional gender roles as inevitable outcomes of a natural order, as opposed to socially constructed scripts and schemas. The arguments for these factors are outlined below.

Implicit Personality Theory

As noted earlier, the finding that hostile and benevolent sexism are positively correlated may appear counterintuitive to many, perhaps to women in particular. “How can men loathe and at the same time revere women?” might be a woman’s initial reaction. Therefore, some women may view hostility and benevolence as unrelated or negatively correlated; that is, the more benevolent a man’s attitude toward women, the less hostility he should harbor. Such women would be more likely to approve of and therefore socially reward such behavior, leading to its maintenance. However, in so doing they may unknowingly contribute to hostile sexism. The positive relationship between hostile and benevolent sexism suggests that *purely* prosocial, affectively positive motivation may not always exist behind benevolently paternalistic or openly chi-

valric male conduct. An admixture of the positive and negative beliefs and feelings is a distinct possibility. Therefore, women's favorable response to such conduct may serve to confirm negative stereotypes of women held by ambivalent and decidedly hostile sexists.

For example, a senior male technician may be more likely to offer assistance to a female, rather than a male, trainee. His underlying motivation may be based upon sexist beliefs regarding female dependence, incompetence, etc., or it may consist of a desire for interpersonal intimacy (with or without sexual overtones). The direct, immediate outcome for the woman in such an interaction is rewarding. However, the indirect and delayed effects, which may be far more profound (e.g., resentment of her by male colleagues, confirmation of their stereotypes about women, etc.), will not prevent her from welcoming his assistance if she is unaware of the relationship between benevolent and hostile sexism.

Traditional Goals

The second possibility is that women with traditional goals may approve of benevolent sexism because it is essentially in harmony with, if not indispensable to, their own personal aspirations. Conversely, women who occupy, or intend to occupy, work roles (particularly in male-dominated professions) have the greatest stake in counteracting gender stereotypes and therefore would stand to incur greater costs from interactions with benevolent or ambivalent sexist men. Workplace harassment may be a source of serious concern for women planning a professional career, but for women whose primary goals are stereotypically feminine (e.g., domestic, maternal, etc.) and who may be without any professional ambition, it may be a rather remote issue. It has been argued that workplace harassment of women is related to ambivalence on the part of males (Fiske & Glick, 1995). Thus, any women with professional aspirations, if they were cognizant of the relationship between the hostile and benevolent aspects of sexist attitude, should clearly disapprove of men who exhibit either variety. Women for whom marital and parental goals take precedence should be more likely to accept or approve of benevolent sexist males because heterosexual intimacy, protective paternalism and complementary gender differentiation are consistent with the traditional husband-wife-family configuration.

Positivist Epistemological Orientation

Finally, women who are less eager to embrace social change (especially with respect to gender roles) and who believe gender differences are bio-

logically determined and therefore not amenable to change should be most likely to approve of benevolent sexism. This cognitive profile is best described as a *positivist* orientation in one's beliefs about gender, as contrasted with its opposing *social constructionist* explanatory orientation (Unger et al., 1986). These two distinct epistemological styles represent implicit, highly generalized ways of understanding and explaining social reality that include, but are not limited to, gender-related phenomena.

Those possessing a positivist epistemology tend to believe that reality is stable and independent of the individual and that behavior (in this case, adopting gender roles) has biological or characterological causes. As a result, positivists generally express an acceptance of current social norms and are likely to oppose efforts toward social change. On the other hand, constructionists view reality as labile, subjective and constructed by social norms. They emphasize the influence of environment on behavior, and tend to explain behavior by acknowledging forces outside of the person. As a result, social constructionists are more likely to express discontent with the societal status quo and tend to view efforts toward social change more favorably. Constructionist epistemology has been found to be positively related to feminist self-identification and participation in women's studies (Unger, 1984-1985; Unger et al., 1986), while positivism has been associated with religious and political conservatism (Draper, 1990; Unger & Jones, 1988; Unger & Lemay, 1991; Unger & Safir, 1990). Therefore, while both constructionists and positivists would be expected to disapprove of hostile sexism, the latter should be more likely to approve of benevolent sexism.

Measuring Women's Equivocal Egalitarianism

The simultaneous approval of benevolent sexism and disapproval of hostile sexism can be conceived of as women's equivocation toward ambivalently sexist men. Identifying women as equivocal egalitarians represents a categorical approach to assessing this phenomenon. We used this approach to obtain a frequency estimate in our sample. As a continuous measure of equivocal egalitarianism in our sample, we used the difference between the ratings of the benevolent and the hostile sexist for each participant. This measure of equivocal egalitarianism should also be accounted for by the variables described above: more positivist epistemology, an implicit personality theory that construes benevolent and hostile sexism as unrelated, and life goals that are more traditional.

In summary, the aims of the present research were as follows. First, to discern whether some women approve of benevolent sexist men while disapproving of hostile sexists – whether equivocal egalitarianism does, in fact, exist. Second, this study sought to identify predictor variables for

equivocal egalitarianism from among women's implicit personality theories, personal goals, and personal epistemology. It was expected that women high in equivocal egalitarianism would be less likely to view hostile and benevolent sexism as positively correlated, would have more traditional life goals and would exhibit a more positivist personal epistemology.

METHOD

Subjects

The participants in this study were 100 female volunteers⁴ recruited from undergraduate psychology courses in a public university in the New York metropolitan, suburban New Jersey area. Demographics of the surrounding communities were reflected in this sample, with approximately 60% of the respondents being White/Caucasian, 20% African-American, 15% Latina, with the remainder mostly Asian-American. Respondents' family incomes ranged from \$15,000 to \$150,000. Six groups, ranging from 12 to 35 in number, participated in classrooms on campus. Identical instructions were given to all participants by the researcher. The importance of candid responses to all items was emphasized, and participants' anonymity was assured. Upon completing the materials, participants were debriefed.

Materials

The following items were randomly ordered and distributed to each participant: (1) the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory⁵ (ASI; Glick & Fiske, 1996); (2) the Attitudes about Reality Scale (AAR; Unger et al., 1986); (3) three profiles, one each of a benevolent sexist, a hostile sexist and a non-sexist male (Appendix A, B, and C, respectively); (4) the respondent's estimate of the possibility that the benevolent sexist and hostile sexist profiles both described the same individual; and (5) a request for a description of the respondent's long-term (ten-year) goals.

The ASI consists of 22 statements on which subjects indicate their degree of agreement using a 6-point Likert scale (0 = *disagree strongly*; 5 = *agree strongly*). Half the items measure hostile sexism and half assess be-

⁴The original sample size was 102. The data from two participants were omitted due to invalid or missing responses.

⁵Due to a time constraint, the ASI was excluded from the materials administered to one group of 14 participants.

nevolent sexism, with each of the three underlying dimensions (gender differentiation, paternalism and heterosexuality) tapped by multiple statements within each category. High scores indicate relatively greater hostile and benevolent sexism.⁶

The condensed, 28-item AAR (Unger et al., 1986) assesses personal epistemology on a constructionist-to-positivist continuum, with higher scores indicating a more positivist orientation. Subjects are asked to indicate their degree of agreement/disagreement on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *disagree strongly* to 7 = *agree strongly*) to statements assessing positivism (e.g., "Most sex differences have an evolutionary purpose") and social constructionism (e.g., "Who has power is a central issue in understanding how society works").

Participants were asked to furnish a description of their lives as they would be in ten years, including their most important goals. Ratings of their responses were performed by five undergraduate volunteers (non-participants in any other aspect of this study) who were paid \$10 each. These ratings were made using a 6-point scale ranging from 0 (*very non-traditional*) to 5 (*very traditional*). Interrater reliability was found to be acceptable for these ratings ($\alpha = .87$). Scores were averaged for each subject based on the five ratings.

The profiles of hostile and benevolent sexists (see Appendix) were developed using belief statements corresponding to the hostile and benevolent sexist items in the ASI. The ASI statements were reworded using synonyms and altered in syntax, but had their semantic content preserved. They were then attributed to hypothetical adult males of unspecified age. The profile of the non-sexist male (see Appendix) was constructed using belief statements contrary to both hostile and benevolent items on the ASI. Each profile included descriptive statements germane to each of the three underlying dimensions of sexism according to the Glick and Fiske model; gender differentiation, heterosexual intimacy/hostility, and paternalism. All profiles were balanced for number of propositions expressed, employed highly similar syntax, and each contained a nearly identical number of words. Participants rated their impression of each profile on a 7-point scale (0 = *strongly unfavorable* to 6 = *strongly favorable*).

Respondents' estimates of covariance between hostile and benevolent sexism were derived from a single 7-point scale item on which they were asked to indicate the possibility that the hostile and benevolent profiles applied to the same person (0 = *very unlikely* to 6 = *very likely*).

⁶The reliability of the ASI was acceptable ($\alpha = .82$). A principal components analysis with a varimax rotation revealed a factor structure reasonably consistent with that found by Glick and Fiske (1996).

Table I. Descriptive Statistics for All Measures^a

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Benevolent Profile	3.41	1.83
Hostile Profile	1.03	1.33
Non-sexist Profile	4.36	1.47
AAR	3.95	.62
ASI-BS	2.43	.84
ASI-HS	1.97	.85
Mean traditional life goal rating	2.67	1.14
Estimate of hostile-benevolent profile covariation	2.56	1.99

^aFor all measures $n = 100$ except ASI subscales where $n = 86$. Higher scores indicated more favorable ratings of the profiles (0 = *highly unfavorable* to 6 = *highly favorable*), more positivist epistemology on the Attitudes about Reality scale (AAR; 1 = *disagree almost completely* to 7 = *agree almost completely*), more benevolent sexist (ASI-BS) and hostile sexist (ASI-HS) beliefs (0 = *disagree strongly* to 5 = *agree strongly*), more traditional life goals (0 = *very non-traditional* to 5 = *very traditional*), and greater belief in the coexistence of hostile and benevolent sexism (0 = *very unlikely* to 6 = *very likely*).

RESULTS

Profile Ratings

Table I shows the descriptive statistics for all measures. Mean ratings for the hostile, benevolent and non-sexist profiles were analyzed using a one-way analysis of variance procedure. Differences were found to be significant, $F(2,97) = 121.02$, $p < .01$. Post-hoc analyses using Tukey's HSD revealed that both the benevolent sexist ($M = 3.41$) and the non-sexist ($M = 4.36$) were evaluated more favorably than the hostile sexist individual ($M = 1.03$), $ps < .05$. The non-sexist was also rated more favorably than was the benevolent sexist.

One-sample t-tests were employed to compare the mean ratings for the benevolent and hostile sexist profiles to the scale's neutral midpoint (3). These analyses revealed that the benevolent sexist was rated as significantly more favorable than neutral, $t(99) = 2.24$, $p < .05$, two-tailed. The hostile sexist was rated as significantly less favorable than neutral, $t(99) = 14.81$, $p < .001$, two-tailed.

A one-sample t-test was also conducted on the benevolent-hostile sexist profile covariation estimates provided by all respondents against the scale midpoint (3 = "don't know"). These estimates were given in response to the question, "What is your estimate of the possibility that J (the benevolent sexist) and H (the hostile sexist) might be the same person?" The mean estimate ($M = 2.56$) was significantly lower than the scale midpoint, $t(99) = 2.21$, $p < .05$. In other words, in the aggregate, participants believed that the hostile and benevolent sexist were probably not same person.

Correlational Analyses

Table II shows the zero-order correlations among measures. A significant correlation was found between AAR scores and benevolent sexist profile ratings, $r(98) = .45, p < .001$. The correlation between AAR and ratings of the hostile sexist profile was also significant, $r(98) = .27, p < .01$. Thus, a more positivist epistemology was associated with greater approval of benevolent sexism.

Significant correlations were also found between AAR scores and scores on the ASI, $r(84) = .55, p < .001$. This relationship held for both the ASI-Benevolent subscale (BS), $r(84) = .48 (p < .001)$ and the ASI-Hostile subscale (HS), $r(84) = .45, p < .001$. Consistent with the findings of Glick and Fiske (1996) and Glick et al. (1997), scores on the ASI subscales were positively related, $r(84) = .42, p < .001$. Semipartial correlations between ASI subscales and AAR scores resulted in attenuated, but still significant, coefficients. For ASI-BS (controlling for HS) and AAR, $r(84) = .36, p < .01$; for ASI-HS (controlling for BS) and AAR, $r(84) = .31, p < .01$.

Ratings for the hostile sexist profile were significantly correlated with scores on the ASI-HS, $r(84) = .63, p < .001$. In addition, ratings for the benevolent sexist profile were related to scores on the ASI-BS, $r(84) = .51, p < .001$. First order semipartial correlations between the ASI subscales and the profile ratings were also significant. For ASI-HS (controlling for BS) and hostile profile ratings, $r(84) = .43, p < .001$; for ASI-BS (controlling for HS) and benevolent profile ratings, $r(84) = .58, p < .001$. These results suggest that the operationalization of benevolent and hostile sexism in the profiles was valid.⁷

The perception of covariation estimate between the benevolent and hostile sexist was related to approval ratings for the hostile sexist $r(98) = .22, p < .03$. In addition, it was marginally related to approval ratings for the benevolent sexist and to respondents' goals, both $r(98) = -.17, ps = .08$. Thus, approval for the hostile sexist, disapproval of the benevolent sexist, and less traditional goals were significantly or marginally associated with covariation estimates for the benevolent and hostile sexist.

Equivocal Egalitarianism

Participants were classified as equivocal egalitarians if they rated the hostile sexist unfavorably (i.e., < 3), and rated the benevolent sexist favorably

⁷Six volunteers from the same population as the participants were recruited to read the original Glick and Fiske (1996) article and then sort the unlabeled profiles into the categories of benevolent, hostile and non-sexist. Only one misclassification occurred, suggesting that the relevant constructs had been captured in the profiles.

Table II. Zero-Order Correlation Coefficients for All Measures^a

	AAR	ASI-HS	ASI-BS	Benevolent Profile	Hostile Profile	Non-sexist Profile	Traditional life goals	Covariation Estimate	Equivoval Egalitarianism
AAR									
ASI-HS	.45 ^d								
ASI-BS	.48 ^d	.42 ^d							
Benevolent Profile	.45 ^d	.34 ^c	.51 ^d						
Hostile Profile	.27 ^c	.63 ^d	.33 ^c	.18					
Non-sexist Profile	.09	-.37 ^d	-.32 ^c	-.19	-.32 ^c				
Traditional life goals	.05	.06	-.02	.13	.07	-.05			
Covariation Estimate	-.04	.14	-.12	-.17	.22 ^b	-.06	-.17		
Equivoval Egalitarianism	.23 ^b	-.03	.36 ^c	.77 ^d	-.48 ^d	.04	.07	.30 ^c	

^aNote: $n = 100$ for all measures except ASI-HS and ASI-BS where $n = 86$. Higher scores indicate more positivist epistemology (AAR), greater endorsement of benevolent sexist beliefs (ASI-BS) and hostile sexist beliefs (ASI-HS), more approval of each of the profiles, more traditional life goals, greater belief in the coexistence of hostile and benevolent sexism, and greater equivoval egalitarianism (difference between rating of benevolent profile and rating of hostile profile).

^b $p < .05$.

^c $p < .01$.

^d $p < .001$.

(i.e., > 3). Participants were classified as unequivocal egalitarians if they rated the hostile sexist unfavorably, rated the benevolent sexist as neutral or unfavorable (i.e., $< \text{or} = 3$), and rated the non-sexist as neutral or favorable (i.e., $> \text{or} = 3$).⁸ Forty-four subjects qualified as equivocal egalitarians, while 37 qualified as unequivocal egalitarians. The remaining 19 subjects exhibited either a negative response bias, rating all profiles lower than the neutral point ($n = 3$), or evaluated the hostile sexist favorably ($n = 16$).

In order to obtain a continuous (rather than a categorical) measure of respondents' ambivalence toward sexists, an equivocal egalitarianism score was computed for each participant by subtracting the rating of the hostile sexist from that of the benevolent sexist. Thus, higher scores on this measure indicate relatively more equivocation. Zero-order correlations showed that this measure was positively associated with a positivist epistemology, $r(98) = .23, p < .05$. In addition, the measure was negatively associated with estimated covariation between the hostile and sexist profiles, $r(98) = -.30, p < .001$. Respondents' goals were not related to this measure, $r(99) = .07, p = .48$. Thus, of the three predictions made regarding potential predictors of equivocation, only one proved to be unsubstantiated (respondents' goals) at the level of zero-order correlates (see Table II).

To better assess support for our predictions, a path analysis was conducted. First, this analysis regressed covariation estimates on (a) AAR scores and (b) respondents' goals. Second, this analysis regressed the equivocal egalitarianism measure on (a) respondents' covariation estimates and (b) AAR scores. The results of this analysis suggested that the model was acceptable, $\chi^2(1) = .01, p = .98$ (GFI = 1.00, AGFI = .99).⁹

Figure 1 shows the results of the path analysis. As can be seen, covariation estimates were marginally predicted by respondents' goals (path coefficient = $-.17, p = .08$). Thus, women with more traditional goals were somewhat less likely to estimate that the benevolent and sexist profiles described the same man. In turn, equivocal egalitarianism was negatively predicted by the covariation estimates (path coefficient = $-.29, p < .01$). Finally, equivocal egalitarianism was positively predicted by AAR scores, path coefficient = $.21, p < .03$. Thus, a positivist epistemology and a reluctance to view the benevolent and hostile sexist as the same person were likely to lead to approval of the benevolent sexist but disapproval of the hostile sexist on the part of respondents. Respondents' goals were not directly predictive of equivocal egalitarianism (path coefficient = $.01, ns$, in a modified, fully-determined version of this model). However, there was

⁸The requirement of a neutral or favorable rating on the non-sexist profile was imposed to omit subjects with negative response bias from the unequivocal egalitarian category.

⁹ASI-HS and ASI-BS scores were not included in this model due to their conceptual redundancy with the profile ratings.

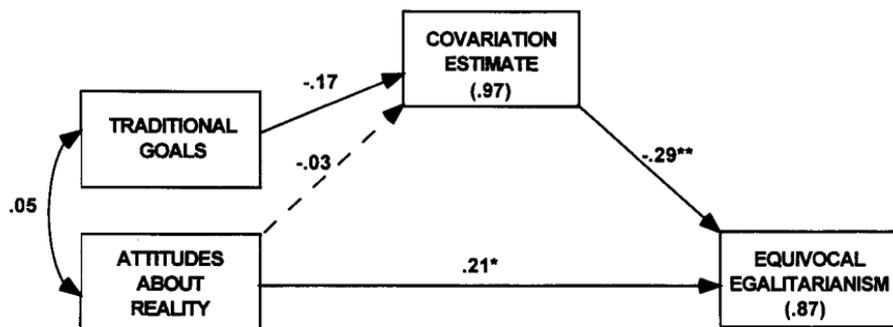


Fig. 1. Path analysis predicting equivocal egalitarianism. Path coefficients are standardized. High scores represent (a) traditional goals, (b) positivist epistemology (AAR), (c) higher covariation estimates between the hostile and benevolent sexist profiles, and (d) more equivocal egalitarianism. Error terms are in parentheses. Dashed arrows indicate nonsignificant paths at $p > .10$, $*p < .05$, and $**p < .01$.

some evidence of an indirect influence via the link between goals and covariation estimates. That is, respondents with more traditional goals were less likely to estimate that the hostile and benevolent sexist were the same man and that estimation, in turn, predicted less equivocal egalitarianism. Taken together, the predictors for equivocal egalitarianism accounted for 13% of the variance in that measure ($R = .39$, $p = .001$). In contrast, the predictors for covariation estimation accounted for 3% of the variance in that measure ($R = .17$, $p = .23$). Thus, the model was better at accounting for respondents' equivocal egalitarianism scores than it was at accounting for their covariation estimates.

DISCUSSION

In response to the question that prompted this study—"Do women approve of benevolent sexism?"—the answer cannot be framed in dichotomous terms. Fifty-five of the 100 respondents rated the hypothetical benevolent sexist male as more favorable than neutral, and of that group, 44 (80%) rated the hostile sexist male as unfavorable to some degree. In fact, for all participants, the mean rating of the benevolent sexist was one corresponding to slight approval, being significantly above the neutral point in the scale, whereas the mean rating of the hostile sexist was one of strong disapproval, significantly below neutral. Thus there was some evidence of equivocal egalitarianism in this sample. Apparently, some women do "want it both ways" in the sense that they are willing to accept and perhaps even respond positively to benevolent sexism, while simultaneously disapproving

of hostile sexist attitude in men. On the other hand, the overall rating of the non-sexist male was significantly more favorable than that of the benevolent sexist, suggesting that men who hold more egalitarian, less paternalistic views of women were more highly regarded by these respondents.

It should be acknowledged that a participant's evaluative response to a one-paragraph, textual description of a hypothetical benevolent or hostile sexist is a simplistic representation of what might transpire in an actual social interaction. Nonetheless, the aforementioned findings do support the notion that benevolent sexism may sometimes be, if not encouraged and rewarded, at least favorably regarded by some women. Finding that a substantial portion of the subject sample did indeed approve of benevolent sexism (but disapprove of hostile sexism) raises the second issue investigated herein—what predictors best account for this equivocal egalitarianism?

The results of the path analysis suggested that, as expected, an implicit personality theory was an important predictor of equivocal egalitarianism. Specifically, women less likely to perceive a correlation between the benevolent and hostile sexist tended to approve of the benevolent sexist while simultaneously disapproving of the hostile sexist. Thus, these respondents were more ambivalent about sexism in men—finding benevolent sexism to be more favorable than hostile sexism. In addition, personal epistemology was a prominent factor in accounting for equivocal egalitarianism. As expected, social constructionist women were less likely to “equivocate” (i.e., approve of benevolent sexism but disapprove of hostile sexism). This is not surprising, given that social constructionists were less likely to adhere to benevolent sexist beliefs themselves, as demonstrated by the significant correlation between AAR and ASI-Benevolent scores. The significant correlation between AAR and ASI-Hostile scores also suggested a stronger rejection of hostile sexist beliefs by social constructionists. Such results are consistent with previous findings that show a link between constructionist epistemology and feminist ideology (Unger, 1984-1985; Unger et al., 1986).

Respondents' life goals were not directly predictive of ambivalence toward sexism in men (i.e., equivocal egalitarianism). Thus, women apparently do not approve of benevolent sexism in men simply because it is congruent with or necessary to achievement of traditional life goals. However, life goals may play an indirect role. Although the evidence is marginal, results of the path analysis suggested that traditional goals may predict less likelihood of estimating covariance between hostile and benevolent sexism in men. Because the covariance estimates were predictive of equivocation, the role of women's life goals may prove to be important in equivocal egalitarianism given a more powerful measure of this construct. In the current study, the single-item measure was open-ended and many responses were brief. The responses were also quite homogeneous—with only a few ex-

ceptions, respondents' goals included marriage, child-rearing, obtaining an undergraduate degree and securing a job. Finally, the 10-year time frame may have been too temporally remote. More proximal goals might have yielded stronger results.

Beyond finding a marginal relationship between traditional goals and covariation estimates, the path analysis model was unable to account for respondents' covariation estimates. Because they were significant predictors of equivocal egalitarianism, predicting the covariation estimates themselves is an important task for future research. What we can note is that overall, the mean for respondents on this estimate was significantly below the neutral point ("don't know") on the scale. The implications of these findings are profound. If hostile and benevolent sexism are routinely and positively correlated, this constitutes a serious underestimate of the coincidence of the two forms of sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Even if hostile and benevolent sexism are unrelated, as Glick and Fiske (1996) found with their samples of older men, an inclination to judge them as negatively related constitutes a tendency toward error.

Thus, this study may have revealed a pervasive social-cognitive bias with important ramifications for many gender-related problems. If one's implicit personality theory holds that hostile and benevolent sexism are mutually exclusive (or tend to be), a dichotomous categorization scheme may be a possible outcome. Once a person is classified as benevolent, many cues that might otherwise be construed as indications of hostile sexism may be overlooked, distorted or interpreted to ensure consistency with the pre-existing belief in benevolence.

By responding in positive ways to benevolent sexism, women may unwittingly buttress related hostile sexist beliefs in men. The differences between beliefs that support protective paternalism and those that underlie dominative paternalism may be quite subtle; in fact, Glick and Fiske (1996) argue that the overlap is considerable. According to Sigel (1996), by enacting the role of provider and protector to women, men may come to feel entitled to dominance.

Much the same can be said for complementary and competitive gender differentiation. Women are more likely to be the targets of helping behavior, but at the same time, they may be devalued for receiving such help (Piliaven & Unger, 1985). In a professional context, it seems plausible that such a dynamic might well work against many women. Women are often evaluated more favorably than men on the basis of communal rather than agentic traits (Eagly & Mladnic, 1989; Eagly et al., 1991). However, when the marketplace extols the virtues of "hard-nosed pragmatism" in corporate executives and when pundits and the public praise "tough-mindedness" in political leaders, these "positive" stereotypes may serve to exclude women

from such positions. Thus it stands to reason that benevolent sexist belief may play a role in gender discrimination, in particular with respect to the "glass ceiling."

Several researchers have proposed a link between what would be labeled benevolent sexist belief structure (especially heterosexual intimacy) and sexual harassment. Pryor, Geidd, and Williams (1995) discuss the possibility that some acts of harassment are engaged in by men with genuine non-exploitative motives of intimacy. Such men may make faulty inferences with respect to women's desire for intimacy or select inappropriate responses (e.g., engaging in sexualized behavior in a professional setting) due to their benevolent sexist beliefs. Fiske and Glick (1995) have labeled such men "earnest" harassers due to their authentically benevolent intentions.

With respect to both sexual harassment and the glass ceiling, the fact that a man can be, as Glick and Fiske (1996) stated, either "patronizingly sweet" or "viciously hostile" depending on the circumstances, can prove problematic for women who view benevolent sexism and hostile sexism as unrelated or mutually exclusive. Forming alliances with and placing trust in men who appear to be paternalistic benefactors may be counterproductive strategies if those same men in a different situation (for example, when women reach the same level in an organizational hierarchy) are likely to become antagonistic opponents.

Of course, not all prosocial behavior toward women by men constitutes benevolent sexism. It is the belief system underlying the conduct that determines whether or not a man's actions can be accurately classified as benevolently sexist. For example, a man may support his organization's effort to actively recruit and develop more high-level female executives because he believes that a history of past discrimination has created structural inequities that can only be overcome by such a compensatory strategy. This is certainly not benevolent sexism. However, if a man favors such a policy because he believes women are constitutionally incapable of competing for and succeeding in such positions on a "level playing field" or because he desires more potential romantic partners in the workplace, then the behavior could be appropriately labeled as benevolent sexism. However, unlike the profiles used in this study, men do not frequently offer for public view their true beliefs regarding women. Indeed, some of these may be implicit (i.e., automatic and non-conscious; cf. Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). Inferences about the beliefs held by others must often be drawn from highly ambiguous evidence gleaned through social interaction.

Several other avenues of research are suggested by these findings. Under what circumstances are benevolent versus hostile beliefs (and behaviors) activated? Glick and Fiske (1996) discussed subtyping as a potential underlying foundation of ambivalent sexism. In fact, it has been demon-

strated that ambivalent sexists do evaluate subtypes of women (both self- and experimenter-generated) in a more polarized fashion (Glick et al., 1997). There appear to be situational factors that may facilitate or inhibit the classification of women as certain subtypes, such as the priming of women as sex objects (Rudman & Borgida, 1995).

Also, numerous questions arise with respect to men, their beliefs about benevolent sexism, and the attitude functions it may serve. Do men view benevolent and hostile sexism as unrelated, as did the women in this study? Do they do so even when they themselves are ambivalent sexists (i.e., when they score high on both ASI subscales)? Glick et al. (1997) have speculated about how benevolent sexism may serve to minimize dissonance or internal conflict in ambivalent sexist men. In effect, it may allow them to rationalize their hostile sexism and continue to view themselves as non-sexist. One could thus argue a priori that benevolent sexism serves a psychological function for the ambivalent sexist, protecting the self against dissonance-arousing internal conflict. Such a function has been referred to as ego-defensive (Katz, 1960). This hypothesis, although intuitively plausible, awaits empirical confirmation.

CONCLUSION

The data obtained in this study reveal that women are not fully cognizant of the link between benevolent and hostile sexism. The fact that sexism is quite often an ambivalent attitude, and that women tend to be unaware that it is, may help to account for its continued resistance to elimination. If we are to make further progress toward a more egalitarian, more harmonious society, women and men alike must come to understand the complex and often paradoxical nature of sexism.

APPENDIX

Hostile Sexist Profile

H is an adult male who believes that many women exploit the movement toward equality to gain unfair advantage over men. He is convinced that women are often overly sensitive and misconstrue humorous, casual remarks as put-downs or sexual harassment. He feels that many women make unreasonable, conflicting demands of men, placing them in a "damned if you do, damned if you don't" dilemma. It is his opinion that many women enjoy provoking men by arousing them sexually and then refusing them or being offended by their advances. He believes that women

undervalue men and fail to appreciate everything that men do for them. He feels that most women use men for their own ends and, when in a relationship, attempt to restrain a man's independence and exert undue control over his behavior.

Benevolent Sexist Profile

J is an adult male who firmly believes that, despite any achievements, a man's life remains incomplete without the love of a woman. He feels that such a relationship should be one in which the man upholds the woman as an object of adoration. He is convinced that women have a more highly developed and keenly felt moral sense than do men and that they are disposed to act in a more ethical fashion. He believes that women possess a naturally superior aesthetic sensibility which makes them better judges in matters of culture and taste. He sees women as being in need of male protection and as entitled to special treatment (such as being rescued or treated for injuries first) in a disaster or emergency. He holds the view that it is a man's obligation to provide financial support and economic security for a woman.

Non-Sexist Profile

K is an adult male who believes that women are seeking only equality and freedom from discrimination, not special treatment or unfair advantage over men. In cases of extreme danger or hardship, he feels that a person's sex should not be a factor in determining who is helped first. He is convinced that neither sex is superior with respect to moral sensibility or ethical behavior. He also holds that neither sex possesses more refined taste or esthetic judgement than the other. He feels that intimacy with women is important to men, but not indispensable for a worthwhile life. He does not believe that most women attempt to control or restrain men with whom they share a relationship. It is his opinion that it is rare for women to willingly tempt men sexually with the intent of rejecting and frustrating them for enjoyment.

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