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When is women's benevolent sexism associated with support for other women's agentic responses to gender-based threat?

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Response Letter

Editor's Comments

1. R1 notes the lack of a 3-way interaction in Study 3. I think you could more clearly frame the Study 3 hypotheses in terms of your overall message in the paper -- that under the right conditions, the support of high-BS women can be extended to women who speak up. In addition to collapsing across behavior as you already do, it would be good to confirm that if you restrict the analyses to only Ps in the "speak up" condition, the expected pattern holds. If this is true, I think some wording changes in the introduction/results for Study 3 would be sufficient, along with perhaps a more assertive acknowledgement in the discussion that you would normally have expected behavior to moderate the 2-way interaction. But I am open to alternative ways of handling this point.

Thank you for this point. We agree that our main message in the paper, and Study 3 in particular, is that high BS women can also support women who speak up, under certain conditions. We have clarified this language in the introduction and results for Study 3, as suggested. We have edited any statements that seemed to mistakenly imply that high-BS women only support women's agentic responses (they also support their non-response), as Reviewer 1 noted. Instead, they can support such agentic actions, under the right circumstances (e.g., when it is supporting traditional gender roles). We believe we have clarified this issue with these revisions.

*We also ran the suggested analyses to further clarify our point that under certain circumstances, high BS women will support women who speak out. We re-ran the analyses in Study 3 using only responses in the response condition. With a smaller sample ($n=83$), we replicate a significant BS*Program Ideology condition interaction on 4 of the 6 dependent variables. Examining the simple slopes shows the same patterns reported in the larger sample: BS increases support for the woman speaking out in the traditional ideology condition (significant simple slope for all variables), and has no effect in the non-traditional condition (nonsignificant for all variables). For the two variables where the interaction was not significant (impression: $p=.26$ and empathy: $p=.16$), the pattern of the simple slopes themselves was identical to the other variables (significant in the traditional ideology condition and non-significant in the non-traditional condition). It is likely that a larger sample size would provide enough power such that these additional interactions would be significant as well, as they show the same overall patterns. In sum, and replicating Study 2, these additional analyses demonstrate most clearly that high BS women approve of women who speak out when it is in defense of traditional gender roles, strengthening our overall argument. We have included a paragraph with these new analyses in the main document, and have additional information on them, including a table with full regression results, provided in the supplemental analyses document.*

We have also added a stronger statement in Study 3's discussion that we would have predicted that behavior would have moderated the 2 way interaction. Despite this, we find that high BS women did not derogate, but in fact similarly supported, women who speak out, as long as it is in support of traditional gender roles.

2. Another issue springs from your (appreciated) efforts to address the feedback from prior versions -- namely, that you have reworded confronting as "agentic responding." Agentic means intentional, purposeful, choiceful. It is possible to speak up agentially, or speak up because one lacks the self-control to stay silent. It is possible to stay silent agentially, or because one lacks the willpower/courage to speak up. Conceptually, this is a 2X2. I am open to various solutions here but I am wondering why simply "responding vs. not responding" wouldn't be the cleanest solution.

Thank you for bringing up this point that you feel more work needs to be done on the terminology. Originally, we had used 'confronting' which the reviewers asked us to rephrase, and for which we chose to use "agentic responding". You ask us to further clarify and elaborate on this terminology. In line with your comment above, we are defining agentic response as one associated with action, power, energy, and assertiveness, following Rudman's work on backlash against agentic women (e.g., Rudman & Glick, 2001; Rudman, 1998), the stereotype content model (Fiske et al., 2002), and Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987; Eagly, Wood, & Diekmann, 2000; Conway, Pizzamiglio, & Mount, 1996). Similarly, this definition is also used in confrontation research in which an individual challenges a perpetrator of sexism (e.g., Kaiser & Miller, 2004).

Our manipulation reflects such 'agentic responding': when the woman in the manipulation deliberately speaks up to the man, it is noted explicitly that she did so because she "believed his comments were offensive and sexist" and "told him so." This last part in particular was included to convey that her actions are purposeful, intentional and assertive, and are less applicable when she stays silent ("but I did not say anything"). In Study 2, she deliberately writes a forceful letter to challenge the man's decision, again reflecting an assertive choice.

In sum, we agree that speaking out is not necessarily always agentic, but we do believe that with regard to what we are looking at in this paper (and what is reflected in our manipulation), this is the case. In light of your suggestions, however, we have removed agentic from our specific study conditions and kept things simple by using "response" vs. "no response". In reality, it seems to us that any label is going to have its drawbacks, so it is a hard choice to make and we are therefore happy to follow your preference on this. Specifically, not speaking out does not mean one does not respond in any way, of course, and indeed 'response vs. no response' does not quite specify what we are talking about or how it relates to benevolent sexism. But one could say these labels (response vs. no response) describe reasonably well the very limited information that is given in these scenarios about the target's behavior, so, as indicated above, we decided to go with your suggestion.

We have also noted this issue in the general discussion, where we acknowledge your points regarding agency and response type. We suggest that future research could fully disentangle these concepts.

While we have changed the labels in our conditions in line with your suggestion, in order to keep consistency with our original reasoning that drove the design of these studies, and with the literature it draws on, we would like to keep the discussion of agentic responses in the introduction and discussion sections. We have added a clarification of

what specific definition of agentic we follow and why. We hope these changes serve to clarify our perspective.

Reviewer #1

3. Clarifying Study 3 lack of interaction: I still do not understand how Study 3 supports the authors' argument about agentic responses. They did not find a 3-way interaction but rather only found a 2-way interaction, "indicating that the relationship between gender role ideology condition and benevolent sexism did not depend on the target's behavioural response (agentic vs. no response)." As I understand it, the major point of the paper is that BS ideology impacts support for other women's agentic responses to gender-based threat" as noted in their title. The agentic response is left out of the significant interaction in this study. I understand that higher BS scores was associated with less favorable impression of the woman who disliked the cooking class cancellation but not associated with impression of the woman who disliked the science class cancellation. However, the authors discuss their findings in terms of agentic action (e.g., "Studies 2 and 3 show that this derogation is limited to agentic actions that challenge gender roles") but agentic action was not part of the significant effect. Perhaps I am completely missing something here.

Please see response to point #1 under the Editor's notes.

4. I appreciate that the authors showed that the scores on the BS scale were not impacted by the manipulation. Rather than give the mean of the scale across conditions it is best to provide the means within the conditions.

Thank you for this suggestion. We now provide the BS scale means broken down by condition for Studies 1-3 in the text.

5. Also, it was good to see that there was some separation between when the participants completed the scale and when they received the vignette with the manipulation. However, it feels a bit overdone to say that completing three simple items that probably took 15 seconds creates temporal separation.

We agree with this point and have edited the manuscript to note the brief nature of the separation in the survey, as to not overstate its impact.

Reviewer #2: No comments to address. Thank you for the positive review and the prior comments.

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Data Availability Statement

Study materials, data, and syntax associated with these studies can be viewed at

https://osf.io/bng7t/?view_only=c6ee5dbff0964814b2dcee4d9bd4198a.

Abstract

Three studies examine how women's benevolent sexism shapes support for other women's agentic responses to gender-based threat. In Study 1, women read vignettes about a woman who agentially responded (vs. no response) to gender-based threat (e.g., sexism). As hypothesized, BS predicted more positive attitudes towards the woman who chose *not* to challenge sexism, and more negative attitudes towards the woman who did. Studies 2 and 3 focused on whether these effects are driven by the behaviour displayed by the target (response or not) or by the ideology it seeks to uphold (traditional or non-traditional). There may be circumstances under which BS is associated with *positive* attitudes towards women's agentic (i.e., non-gender role conforming) behaviour, for instance when it is used to support traditional gender roles. Studies 2 and 3 showed that when women's agentic behaviour is used to uphold traditional gender roles (vs. challenge them), BS is positively associated with support for such behaviour. These findings underscore the importance of ideology underlying women's agentic behaviour: BS can support women's agentic responses that violate prescribed gender roles, so long as they reinforce the status quo.

Keywords: benevolent sexism, agentic response, system-justifying belief, gender, threat

When is women's benevolent sexism associated with support for other women's agentic responses to gender-based threat?

Women continue to be disadvantaged in many societies and in a variety of contexts. Among other indicators, women are under-represented in high paying and high-status jobs, are paid less than men for the work they do (Eurostat, 2018), and are more likely to experience sexual and domestic violence (e.g., Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). However, women who speak out against the discriminatory treatment they have received are often negatively evaluated (see Barreto & Ellemers, 2015; Kaiser & Major, 2006; Stangor et al., 2003 for reviews), not only by members of the out-group (i.e. men), but also by fellow in-group members (i.e. other women). Women who claim gender discrimination are frequently viewed as complainers (Kaiser & Miller, 2001). In other words, both men and women tend to derogate women who speak out and confront gender-based threat (Dodd, Guilano, Boutell, & Moran, 2001; Garcia, Schmitt, Branscombe, & Ellemers, 2010; Kahn, Barreto, Kaiser, & Rego, 2016; Kaiser, Hagiwara, Malahy, & Wilkins, 2009).

This paper focuses specifically on women's responses to other women who challenge gender-based threat and on Benevolent Sexism (BS) as a predictor of these responses. It aims to establish, first, that benevolent sexism is associated with more critical attitudes towards women who agentially respond to gender-based threat (e.g., sexism) and more supportive attitudes toward those who do not. Importantly, however, it also considers circumstances under which benevolent sexism might be associated with *positive* attitudes towards women's agentic behaviour in response to gender-based threat—i.e., when this is a threat to a traditional view of women. Therefore, as challenges to traditional gender roles present a gender-based threat to women who endorse BS, we examine whether BS predicts positive attitudes to women who

respond agentially to these challenges. In this way, we separate the behavioural action (agentic behaviour) from the ideology being expressed (supporting or challenging traditional gender roles) to gain a clearer understanding of why BS predicts negative evaluations of women who speak out against sexism: Is it because of their assertive actions or because of the implications their behaviour has for traditional gender roles and the status quo?

When women experience a gender-based threat, they may speak up, behaving in agentic ways that contradict gender stereotypical prescriptions. Here, agentic responses are defined in terms of power, action, and assertiveness, in line with prior research on gender stereotypes (Eagly, 1987; Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick, 2001). One such agentic response is interpersonal confrontation, in which an individual directly expresses dissatisfaction to a biased perpetrator (Kaiser & Miller, 2004). Women's agentic confrontation behaviour is often studied in the context of gender discrimination, with confrontation behaviour viewed as a way of challenging sexism that seeks to uphold traditional gender roles (e.g., Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Dodd et al., 2001). The current studies examine women's agentic responses to gender-based threat (e.g., sexism in Study 1), as well as agentic actions that challenge or support non-traditional and *traditional* ideologies (Studies 2, 3). That is, in keeping the agentic behaviour the same (e.g., challenge), how does the ideology being reflected (supporting or rejecting traditional gender roles) impact women's evaluations and support of other women? This work, then, disentangles women's agentic actions *per se* from the ideology they serve, by considering agentic responses that *challenge* traditional gender roles, as well as *uphold* traditional gender roles.

Research has mainly examined how members of dominant groups perceive low status group members who confront prejudice (e.g., Richeson & Sommers, 2016). Instead, the current paper highlights intragroup support among women, with an eye toward how to gain crucial ingroup support. Understanding when and under what conditions women will support or derogate other women who experience and challenge traditional gender roles is a key step in enacting collective action and broader social change (van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008).

Benevolent Sexism

Benevolent sexism is a form of sexism that emerges from stereotypes of women as warm but incompetent, and communicates an ideal view of women as caregiving, domestic, and submissive (Glick & Fiske, 1996; 2001). Benevolent sexism is endorsed both by men and by women, across a variety of national contexts (e.g., Glick et al., 2000). It is positive in tone and consists of the exaltation of women who conform to traditional gender roles. Due to its positive phrasing, benevolent sexism often remains unrecognized as a form of sexism, and it is frequently misperceived as a positive attitude toward women (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005; Kilianski & Rudman, 1998). Although benevolent sexism is theoretically proposed to function mainly as the ‘carrot’ that rewards traditional gender roles, it can also function as the ‘stick’ that punishes deviations from traditional gender roles (e.g., Abrams et al., 2003; McMahon & Kahn, 2015; Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick, 2001; Sakalh-Uğurlu & Glick, 2003; Sibley & Wilson, 2004). Because BS values women’s submissive and demure attitudes, it is predicted that higher BS among women would be associated with more negative attitudes towards women who act agentically (outside their prescribed gender role) and challenge sexism, and more positive attitudes towards women who choose not to. This notion is examined in Study 1.

However, it is additionally argued that the effects of benevolent sexism on attitudes towards women's agentic behaviour in response to gender-based threat depend on *what ideology is being confronted*. Previous research on women's agentic behaviour focuses on behaviour that opposes discrimination or inequality, or challenges traditional gender roles (see e.g., Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Dodd et al., 2001). That is, most previous research focuses on confrontation of *sexism or bias*. This raises the question of whether negative responses to confrontation might emerge because confronters behave agentially, or because they are challenging sexism and thereby expressing egalitarian ideologies. More broadly, agentic actions can also be used to *defend* traditional roles in response to perceived threat. Importantly, what is a threat to women low in BS is an ideal to women high in BS, and vice-versa. So, while low BS women perceive gender-related threat when experiencing sexism, high BS women feel gender-based threat when traditional gender roles are threatened. Feminism and non-traditional gender roles violate BS values, which can lead to threat and backlash (Glick & Fiske, 1996). For example, one can look to prominent American conservative activist Phyllis Schlafly who fought against the perceived threat of the gender equality act, believing that it would be a "step down" for women, in her support of traditional gender roles and family values (Sullivan, 2016).

Will BS also predict negative attitudes to this form of agentic behaviour? Or might BS actually inspire positive attitudes toward speaking out when it serves to uphold traditional gender roles? Regarding the first option – that higher BS is always associated with negative evaluations of women's objections in response to gender-based threat (regardless of what is being challenged)– the fact that agentic behaviour is considered counter-stereotypical for women, plays a large role in affecting evaluations (e.g., Prentice & Carranza, 2002). Relatedly, benevolent

sexism predicts the extent to which people endorse such gender stereotypes involving agency and communality (Glick & Fiske, 2001). Individuals high in benevolent sexism are more likely to approve of women who behave demurely or submissively, in line with stereotypical gender prescriptions (Rudman & Glick, 2001), rather than agentic ones. Therefore, because an agentic response is “unfeminine” and violates gender roles, this action should lead to derogation regardless of ideology.

The second option, instead, suggests that the underlying ideology agentic actions seeks to uphold is crucial in determining the relationship between BS and attitudes towards agentic responses. More specifically, it suggests that BS is associated with negative attitudes towards agentic responses when it challenges traditional gender roles, but *positive* attitudes when it defends traditional gender roles. This idea is supported by research that has argued that BS represents a system justifying belief (SJBs, Glick & Fiske, 2001; Jost & Kay, 2005). SJBs are sets of beliefs that justify the existing status system and therefore contribute to its maintenance (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Sidanius & Pratto, 2001). As such, SJBs are associated with support for any behaviour that defends the status quo, which includes agentic behaviour promoting traditional gender roles. Specifically, a study on White Americans’ attitudes towards those who confront “anti-White discrimination” (Wilkins, Wellman, & Kaiser, 2013) supports this point. In this case, discrimination itself goes against the system, as advantaged groups are used to being valued and celebrated, not discriminated against. The confronter, then, is perceived as restoring or defending the social status quo by confronting anti-White bias and restoring the hierarchy. As endorsement of SJBs increased, the confronter was evaluated more positively. As an SJB (Glick & Fiske, 2001; Jost & Kay, 2005), BS suggests that women are more suited to certain (low-

status) roles, which serves to justify their disadvantaged position relative to men. In this line of reasoning, then, BS is associated with more positive attitudes towards any behaviour, even an agentic one, that reinforces traditional gender roles and hierarchy. The current studies examine whether this might also include behaviours that are generally seen as counter-stereotypical for women, such as agentic responses to gender-based threat.

Overview of the Research

Across three studies, this research examines whether benevolent sexism moderates women's reactions to other women who engage in agentic responses to gender-based threat. Study 1 examines women's agentic behaviour that challenges traditional gender roles (e.g., sexism). In doing so, the goal is to establish the basic relationship between benevolent sexism and agentic responses to gender-based threat as it is most often studied in the literature (e.g., confronting sexism). Women participants were exposed to a woman who challenges a sexist perpetrator (or not), and we examine how BS impacts participants' perceptions of this woman. It is expected that higher benevolent sexism would be associated with reduced support for the woman who responds to gender-based threat, and increased support for the woman who does not.

In Studies 2 and 3, the gender role ideology and the response are separated, in order to examine whether women who act agentially are negatively evaluated due to their assertive actions or because they reject traditional gender roles. Study 2 involves 2 different conditions, both of which describe a woman showing interpersonal agentic behaviour in response to gender-based threat. In one condition, her actions challenge traditional gender roles (as in Study 1) and in the other condition, her actions defend traditional gender roles. It is expected that, as in Study 1, higher benevolent sexism is associated with reduced support for agentic actions that challenge

traditional roles. Crucially, it is also expected that benevolent sexism is associated with *greater* support for agentic actions that defend traditional roles. Study 3 combines the manipulations from Study 1 and 2 in a 2x2 fully crossed design manipulating behaviour (responding vs. not) and the ideology expressed (traditional vs. non-traditional). Similarly, it is hypothesized that higher benevolent sexism predicts greater support for women who endorse traditional roles, and that the specific behaviour they use to do so (response or not) may play less of a role.

Study 1

Study 1 examines how benevolent sexism affects women's evaluations of a woman who either responds or not toward a male perpetrator of sexism (e.g., gender-based threat). It is hypothesized that women's benevolent sexism will moderate impressions of the female target, such that (H1) the higher participants' BS, the more positive their impression of the female target who does not respond, and (H2) the more negative their impression of the target who responds. The higher the BS, the more women will regard it as inappropriate for women to speak up and as appropriate for women *not* to respond to gender-based threat, "rewarding" the woman who acts in accordance with prescribed gender norms with more positive evaluations.

Method

Design and Participants

The study included 2 between-participant experimental conditions that varied a female target's behavioural response: A female target of sexism either responded or did not respond to the male perpetrator's sexist comment. In addition, participants' benevolent sexism was measured before the manipulation of confrontation and used as a continuous predictor in the analyses. The study was conducted through the MTurk online participant system. Of the 133

participants, 99 were White/Caucasian (74.4%), 13 African American/Black (9.8%), 8 were Asian/Asian American (6.0%), 6 Latino/Hispanic (4.5%), and 7 identified as “Other” (5.3%). The mean age was 34.7 years old ($SD=12.9$). All participants were located in the United States and received \$0.50 compensation for their participation, which was in line with MTurk recommendations at the time of data collection. A total of 14 participants were excluded for failing the manipulation or attention checks. This left a final sample of 119 participants.¹

Sensitivity analyses were conducted using G*Power (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007; Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner & Lang, 2009). Results indicated that this sample of $N=119$ with 3 predictors could detect a two-way interaction effect of small effect size ($f^2 = 0.07$) with 80% power (given $\alpha=.05$). Effect sizes for the study analyses exceed these indications (see Table 1), suggesting adequate power.

Materials and Procedure

After giving consent to participate, participants received an online survey about American society and impression formation. The survey began by asking the 11 item Benevolent Sexism measure from the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (from 1= strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree; Glick & Fiske, 1996). Sample items include, “Women should be cherished and protected by men,” and “Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess” ($\alpha= .90$). Because people can adjust their BS to the context (e.g., McMahon & Kahn, 2015), it was preferable to measure BS before the manipulation, with the addition of 3 distractor items (e.g.,

¹ The pattern of results is similar if all participants are included.

questions about their city of residence) to provide additional, albeit very brief, temporal separation. Still, it is possible that BS was primed through this manipulation, and we discuss this possibility further in the general discussion.

After completing this measure, participants saw a paragraph purportedly written by a 23 year old White female participant from a different study. The paragraph described a woman's reaction to a sexist comment made by a male colleague. This reaction varied depending on the experimental condition (response vs. no response). Both vignettes began with the following description:

I was having lunch with co-workers and some businessmen who were visiting our company for a meeting. While we were eating lunch together, I heard one of the visiting businessmen talk about how he preferred to hire males instead of females at his company. He said that women are not as committed to the job as men, always have childcare issues, are too emotional, and are too soft for the business world. I did not like what the businessman said.

In the no response condition, the female target continued, "I found his comment offensive and sexist, but I did not say anything," making a clear attribution to sexism, but choosing to not respond to the perpetrator. In the response condition, the woman wrote, "I told him that I found his comment offensive and sexist," attributing the comment to sexism and directly responding to the perpetrator.

After reading the scenario, participants answered a series of questions. All responses were provided on seven point Likert type scales. Participants' *impression* of the target was assessed with one item tapping into overall impression (i.e., "What is your overall impression of this woman?" from 1=very negative to 7=very positive), their impression of how the woman

handled the situation (1=very negative to 7=very positive), and impressions on specific traits assessing competence (competent, capable), trustworthiness (sincere, honest, trustworthy), sociability (nice, friendly, sociable), and complaining (reverse coded: argumentative, problematic, complainer) (from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree). Because the 13 items formed a reliable scale ($\alpha=.92$) and revealed similar patterns, they were combined into one measure of overall impression of the target. Participants also rated the gender-appropriateness of the target's response by indicating the extent to which the woman behaved as women 'ought to' or 'should ideally' act ($r=.85$).²

The survey continued with manipulation and attention checks, asking participants to briefly summarize in their own words the scenario that the woman described (open ended, coded as correct or incorrect) and how the woman responded to the businessman's comments (responding or not responding). Finally, participants answered basic demographic information (participants' gender, race, age). Once completed, participants were debriefed, paid, and thanked for their participation.

Preliminary analyses

² The two dependent variables (impression and gender appropriateness) were correlated at $r=.50$. In light of space, and to avoid redundancy, the complete data is provided in Table 1. The focus of the analysis and discussion is on the impression variable. Supplemental Materials Online for the study also contain graphs of the interaction and simple slopes analyses for the additional variable.

Before proceeding to hypothesis testing, it was established that scores on benevolent sexism ($M=3.56$, $SD=1.27$) did not differ based on confrontation condition (no response: $M=3.62$, $SD=1.18$; response: $M=3.48$, $SD=1.38$, $F<1$).

Results

Regression analyses tested the hypothesis that the female target's response (responding or not) would moderate the effect of benevolent sexism on women's impressions of the target. The analyses entered benevolent sexism and response condition (0=no response, 1=response), as well as the benevolent sexism X response condition interaction (see Table 1 for full results). Results indicated a main effect of benevolent sexism on impressions of the female target, $b=.22$, $SE=.09$, $t(115)=2.40$, $p=.02$. As predicted, this effect was qualified by the interaction between response condition and benevolent sexism, $b=-.42$, $SE=.13$, $t(115)=-3.29$, $p=.001$ ($f^2=.09$ for model, see Figure 1). Simple slope analyses were conducted and graphed using Interaction software (Soper, 2013). Supporting H1, the simple slope of the no response condition was reliably positive, $b=.22$, $SE=.09$, $t(115)=2.40$, $p=.02$, indicating that when the target chose not to respond, higher benevolent sexism was associated with more positive impressions of that target. Conversely, supporting H2, the simple slope for the response was negative, $b=-.20$, $SE=.09$, $t(115)=-2.25$, $p=.03$, revealing that the higher participants' benevolent sexism, the more negative was their impression of the woman who challenged the perpetrator.

Discussion

Study 1 finds that benevolent sexism moderates women's impressions of other women's responses to gender-based threat (e.g., sexism). In a business context, women's impressions of a woman who spoke out against a man making sexist statements depended on her behavioural

reaction and BS. Higher BS was associated with both (H1) more positive impressions of women who chose not to confront sexism and (H2) more negative impressions of women who respond agentially to sexism. In this way, this study provides evidence that BS can function as both the ‘carrot’ and the ‘stick’, through its association with more negative impressions of women who dispute the gender hierarchy, and more positive impressions of women who choose not to do so. In this study, both women recognized the event as sexist (although only one of them chose to respond). That is, her response was manipulated but not the role of the underlying ideology, which is the aim of Studies 2 and 3. Will women who speak out in support of traditional ideologies still be derogated by higher BS women?

Study 2

Study 2 sheds further light on the process underlying the role of BS in women’s evaluation of in-group members who speak out against gender-based threat. Women’s agentic responses to gender-based threat can be used to challenge sexist beliefs and promote non-traditional gender roles: Study 1 observed that, in such a case, higher benevolent sexism is associated with reduced support for women who engage in this type of agentic behaviour, while lower BS was associated with more support. However, the crucial argument here is that agentic responses and behaviours can also be used to *uphold* traditional gender roles. In this case, the agentic response is the same, but it serves a different ideology. In Studies 2 and 3, we examine how this difference impacts the relationship between BS and support for women who engage in agentic responses to gender-based threat, separating the role of ideology from the agentic behaviour used to convey the ideology.

Agentic responses to sexism can take many forms, from direct and public actions to indirect and private behaviours. Instead of focusing on women's type of response to gender-based threat, these studies now ask whether role-nonconforming responses would be evaluated positively by high BS women if they support the hierarchy. That is, in keeping the agentic behaviour the same (e.g., challenging a male perpetrator), are negative evaluations of women buffered when they seem to be upholding traditional values?

As noted in the Introduction, BS is associated with critical attitudes towards women who engage in role non-conforming behaviours, and perceivers often find more tactful and role-conforming behaviours by women to be more palatable (Becker & Barreto, 2014; Czopp, Monteith, & Mark, 2006; Gervais & Hillard, 2014; Hyers, 2010; Stangor et al., 2002). As such, BS may predict negative attitudes to agentic actions, regardless of the ideology they uphold - because assertive behaviour is counter-stereotypical for women (Prentice & Carranza, 2002). Alternatively, given that BS is a system-justifying belief (e.g. Brady et al., 2015; Jost & Kay, 2005), one might predict that BS will actually inspire *positive* attitudes to complaining when it serves to uphold traditional gender roles. Study 2, then, will shed light on *why* BS was associated with more critical attitudes towards confrontation in Study 1.

To examine this, Study 2 manipulates women's agentic responses to gender-based threat that supports traditional or non-traditional gender roles. The study scenarios involve a female target challenging a school's decision that affects girls at the school, and her action either served to promote non-traditional (in line with Study 1) or traditional gender roles (new in Study 2). As in Study 1, it is hypothesized that (H1) the higher women's BS, the more negative their impression of a woman who acts agentially to promote non-traditional gender roles.

Importantly, it is further expected (H2) that the higher women's BS, the more *positive* their impression of a woman who acts agentially to promote traditional gender roles.

Method

Design and Participants

Study 2 consisted of 2 between-participants conditions: Responding to advance traditional versus non-traditional gender ideologies. Benevolent sexism was again measured as a continuous variable. All participants read a scenario in which a woman confronted a man. One hundred forty five women participated in the experiment, recruited from the Amazon MTurk participant pool. Of these, 112 (77.2%) identified as White, 16 (11.0%) identified as Black/African American, 10 (6.9%) as Asian/Asian American, 5 (3.5%) as Latino/Hispanic, and 2 (1.4%) identified as 'Other'. The average age of the participants was 35.9 years (SD= 13.1). All participants were from the United States and received \$.50 compensation for their participation. Five participants were excluded for failing basic manipulation checks (letter manipulation check, n=2, class type manipulation check, n=3), resulting in a sample of 140 female participants.³

G*Power was used to test for sensitivity (Faul et al., 2007; 2009). The sample of N=140 with 3 predictors could detect a two-way interaction effect of small effect size ($f^2 = 0.06$) with 80% power (given $\alpha=.05$). Effect size for the regression results all exceeded these cut offs, indicating sufficient power.

³ Patterns reported below are the same if all participants are included in the sample.

Materials and Procedure

Study 2 followed a similar procedure and included identical measures to Study 1. Participants completed an online survey about American society and impression formation. After agreeing to participate, participants answered the benevolent sexism scale ($\alpha = .90$), followed by six distractor items (items about their city and gender, listed on a separate survey page) to provide short temporal distancing between the BS scale and the manipulation, which occurred on separate pages. Next, participants read a vignette containing the experimental manipulation, in which a woman responded to gender-based threat for different reasons—either to advance traditional gender ideologies or a more egalitarian, non-traditional agenda. Specifically, the vignette consisted of a (bogus) letter written by the mother of a high school student to the male school principal objecting to the school's decision to cancel either the science club (non-traditional) or the home economics club (traditional) as part of the after-school programme. The mother explained that this cancelation disproportionately affected girls at the school. She wrote in a letter addressed to the School District Superintendent Eric McLaughlin (traditional condition indicated in parentheses):

I am a concerned parent of a freshman daughter at Marin High School. I would like to state my displeasure and objection to Marin High School's decision to cancel the science club (home economics club) as part of the after school program. The science club (home economics club) is a favourite activity of and highly liked by, young women at the school. The science club (home economics club) offers students the chance to try research (cooking), understand how to conduct an experiment (run a household), and learn about scientific reasoning (home issues). The science club (home economics club) is important to young women to learn necessary skills for their

future careers (responsibilities at home) after graduating high school. Reinstating the science club (home economics club) would ensure that female students are given the best preparation and opportunities to succeed at Marin High School and beyond.

After reading the vignette, participants answered the same 13 questions from Study 1 to assess their impression of the woman ($\alpha = .93$). In addition to the variables of central interest (impression), Study 2 included the same 2 items measuring the gender appropriateness of the target's response from Study 1 (gender appropriateness), as well as 4 items measuring how much the participant agreed with the target's reaction (agree reaction), 3 items measuring how helpful the target's actions were for women (helpful women), 4 items measuring the inference of shared values between the participant and the target (shared values), and 3 items measuring the participant's empathy with the target (empathy).⁴ Afterwards, participants responded to manipulation check questions, which asked participants to briefly summarize the letter (open ended, coded as correct vs. incorrect) and to indicate what club the author did not want cancelled (science club, home economics club, or gym class). The survey concluded with demographic information being collected. At the end, participants were thanked for their participation, debriefed, and paid.

⁴ Given the consistency of the results across measures, the analysis focuses on the impression variable. The results of these additional variables are included in Table 2. The patterns were highly consistent with the impression variable described in the main text. Further analysis and graphs of the additional variables are located in the Supplemental Material Online.

Preliminary analyses. Because benevolent sexism was measured before the manipulation, analyses examined whether BS scores were affected by the manipulations to confirm that randomization was successful. Scores on the benevolent sexism scale ($M=3.44$, $SD=1.28$) did not vary depending on gender role ideology condition (traditional: $M=3.51$, $SD=1.30$; non-traditional: $M=3.38$, $SD=1.26$), $F < 1$.

Results

To test the hypotheses, a regression was conducted in which gender role ideology condition (0=traditional, 1=non-traditional), benevolent sexism (centred), and the interaction term were regressed on impressions of the female target. Table 2 displays the full regression results for all study variables. Results revealed a reliable main effect of ideology condition, $b=.74$, $SE=.15$, $t(136)=5.00$, $p < .001$, and a reliable main effect of benevolent sexism, $b=.47$, $SE=.08$, $t(136)=5.91$, $p < .001$, on impressions of the female target. These two main effects were qualified by the predicted gender role ideology condition*benevolent sexism interaction, $b=-.38$, $SE=.12$, $t(136)=-3.27$, $p < .001$ ($f^2=.43$ for model, see Figure 2). Analyses of the simple slopes revealed that, unlike in Study 1, benevolent sexism was not associated with evaluations of the woman who objected for non-traditional reasons, $b=.09$, $SE=.08$, $t(136)=1.10$, $p=.27$. That is, there was no support for Hypothesis 1. However, the central hypothesis (H2) was supported: higher scores on benevolent sexism were associated with more *positive* perceptions of the woman who objected when she did so for traditional reasons, $b=.47$, $SE=.08$, $t(136)=5.90$, $p < .001$.

A similar pattern of results was observed for the other study variables, including gender appropriateness, agreement with reaction, helpful for women, shared values, and empathy:

higher benevolent sexism was associated with more positive ratings of the woman who confronted for traditional reasons (H1 not supported, H2 supported). Regression analyses for these variables are included in Table 2, and graphs of the significant interaction and simple slope analyse are provided in Supplemental Materials Online.

Discussion

In Study 1, women's agentic responses challenged sexism and traditional gender roles, and higher BS was associated with dislike for these women. Expanding on this effect, Study 2 examined women's agentic responses to gender-related threat that served different purposes: Either advancing or rejecting traditional gender roles. In doing so, it differentiates between agentic actions aimed to reduce gender prejudice and those that instead aim to support traditional gender relations. In Study 2, then, this effect from Study 1 was reversed: Benevolent sexism was associated with more *positive* impressions of women who agentially speak out against gender-based threat, but *only if* it is done to promote traditional gender roles. This indicates that female participants were more responsive to the gender ideology being promoted by the target's behaviour than to the behaviour itself.

Study 2 also produced some unexpected findings. Most importantly, unlike in Study 1, in this case benevolent sexism did not affect attitudes towards the woman advancing non-traditional gender beliefs. Relatedly, results seem to be driven here by women who score *low* on benevolent sexism. There are several differences between Study 1 and Study 2 that might have given rise to these differences, include the more indirect manner of the agentic action (compared to more direct in Study 1), the context of a school (compared to a workplace), and a mother acting on behalf of her child (versus a business woman), which will be discussed further in the General

Discussion. Nevertheless, holding the type of agentic behaviour consistent within a setting, this study established that BS is not always associated with critical attitudes towards women's agentic actions in response to gender-based threat. In some situations, higher BS can be associated with support for acting agentially and challenging a man, namely when it supports traditional roles. By the same token, the absence of BS is not always associated with support for agentic responses to gender threat, but can also lead women to derogate women who act to defend traditional gender roles.

So far, Studies 1 and 2 have examined how BS affects attitudes towards non-traditional women who act agentially (S1 and S2), non-traditional women who do not respond (S1) and traditional women who act agentially (S2) in response to gender-based threat. In Study 3, the manipulations from Study 1 and Study 2 are brought together into a 2 response (response vs. no response) x 2 gender role ideology (traditional vs. non-traditional) design. This set up allows, first, to establish the combined influence of responding behaviour and the ideology it upholds, and second, to also examine how BS affects women's attitudes towards traditional women who do not respond (and therefore act in line with prescribed gender roles), a possibility that was absent from the first 2 studies.

Study 3

Study 3 examines whether high BS women's support of women who stay silent (as found in Study 1) can extend to women who speak up, acting against prescribed gender norms. As Study 2 demonstrated, high BS women can support—and not derogate—women who speak out, as long as their actions serves to advance traditional gender roles. Study 3 is designed to replicate the findings of Study 2 using a fully-crossed design in which an agentic response (vs. no

response) and the traditional (vs. non-traditional) gender role ideology it serves are manipulated. As such, Study 3 fully disentangles the behavioural actions from the ideology it advances. The scenario again takes place in a school context where a mother agentially responds (or does not respond) to the cancellation of a school programme for girls. In both cases, the mother argues that the cancellation of the programme unfairly disadvantages girls, perceiving a gender-based threat. We manipulate whether the school programme in question reflects traditional gender roles (cooking) or non-traditional gender roles (science), and whether the mother chooses to respond to the cancellation or not.

It is hypothesized that stronger BS is associated with (H1) more negative impressions of women who support non-traditional gender roles, and (H2) that this effect is particularly strong when the woman expresses this through agentic responses, in line with Study 1. In line with Study 2, it is also predicted that stronger BS is associated with (H3) more positive impressions of women who support traditional gender roles, and (H4) this effect will not depend on the target's behavioural response. That is, high BS women may support a woman, regardless of if she speaks out or not, as long as she is doing so to advance traditional gender roles.

Method

Design and Participants

This study followed a 2 (gender role ideology: traditional vs. non-traditional) X 2 (response: response vs. no response) between participants design, with benevolent sexism as a continuous predictor. A total of 186 female participants ($M=38.7$ years old, $SD=13.2$) located in the United States were collected from Amazon MTurk for the study. The sample consisted of 135 (72.6%) White, 21 (11.3%) Black/African American, 11 (5.9%) Asian/Asian American, 8

(4.3%) Latino/Hispanic, and 11(5.9%) Other. Four participants were excluded from analysis for failing manipulation or attention checks (identifying gender of author, response condition, and/or ideology condition checks), leaving a final sample of 182 participants.⁵

Sensitivity analyses were conducted using G*Power (Faul et al., 2007; 2009). Results indicated that this sample of N=182 with 7 predictors could detect a three-way interaction effect of small effect size ($f^2 = 0.04$) with 80% power (given $\alpha=.05$). Effect size for the regressions, indicated below, exceeded these indications.

Materials and Procedure

Study 3 followed a similar procedure to Studies 1 and 2 with the same dependent measures as Study 2. Participants agreed to participate in an online survey about American society and, as in the preceding studies, answered the benevolent sexism items from the ASI ($\alpha=.89$), followed by the same distractor items. Next, participants read the experimental vignette, in which the type of gender role ideology expressed (traditional vs. non-traditional) and the woman's behavioural response (response vs. no response) were manipulated. The vignette was purportedly written by a mother of a high school daughter, who described her displeasure with the cancelation of either a "Girls in Science Club" or a "Girls and Cooking Club" at the school and her subsequent response. In all conditions, she perceives the cancellation as disproportionately affecting the girls at the school, representing a gender-based threat. The

⁵ Patterns are the same if all participants are included.

mother describes how she either responded or did not respond to the male principal responsible for the cancellation (traditional condition and no response condition indicated in parentheses):

I was at my daughter's high school for curriculum night. While I was there, the Principal stated that he was cancelling the Girls and Science Club (Girls and Cooking Club) as part of the after school program. I was very displeased at this announcement... The Girls and Science Club (Girls and Cooking Club) offers students the chance to try research (cooking), understand how to conduct an experiment (combine ingredients), and learn about scientific reasoning (grocery shopping guidelines). The Girls and Science Club (Girls and Cooking Club) is especially important for girls to learn necessary skills for their future careers after graduating high school. After making the announcement, the Principal said that it takes too many resources to run the club, that the girls aren't getting useful skills from it, and the girls probably wouldn't use these skills in the future. This cancellation unfairly disadvantages the female students. I did not like what the Principal said regarding the female students and the club cancellation. I found his comments offensive and sexist, and I tactfully told him so (but I did not say anything).

After reading the vignette, participants rated their impression of the mother by answering the same 13 items used in Study 2 ($\alpha = .92$). The additional items from Study 2 were also included (gender appropriateness, helpfulness for women, agree with reaction, shared values, empathy). To gauge their engagement with the story, participants responded to manipulation and attention check items, which included asking participants to briefly summarize the content of the vignette (open ended, coded as correct or incorrect), whether or not the woman responded to the principal, the type of programme that was being cancelled (girls and science club, girls and cooking club, or girls and gym club), and the gender of the author (male, female). They lastly

answered demographic questions. Upon completion, they were thanked, debriefed, and paid.

Participants received \$0.50 compensation for their participation in the study.

Preliminary analyses

As before, benevolent sexism was measured before the manipulation, with the same filler items as Study 2 in between. Confirming that randomization was successful, benevolent sexism scores ($M=3.77$, $SD=1.20$) did not vary depending on whether the target responded ($M=3.84$, $SD=1.15$) or not ($M=3.71$, $SD=1.25$), $F<1$. However, there was a trend, although not-reliable, for an effect of ideology condition on benevolent sexism, with higher levels of benevolent sexism in the traditional condition ($M=3.92$, $SD=1.20$) than in the non-traditional condition ($M=3.61$, $SD=1.20$), $F(1, 180)=3.15$, $p=.08$. It is worth keeping this in mind when considering the results below.

Results

A regression analysis was conducted on impression of the target, in which the main effects of benevolent sexism (centred), gender role ideology condition (0= traditional, 1=non-traditional), and target behavioural response (0=no response, 1=response) were entered, followed by the corresponding 2-way and 3-way interactions. Full results are shown in Table 3. Results revealed a reliable main effect of benevolent sexism, $b=.24$, $SE=.11$, $t(174)=2.13$, $p=.04$, and a main effect of gender role ideology condition, $b=.44$, $SE=.19$, $t(174)=2.31$, $p=.02$. These were qualified by a 2 way interaction between benevolent sexism and gender role ideology condition, $b=-.35$, $SE=.15$, $t(174)=-2.32$, $p=.02$ (see Figure 3). The three way interaction between benevolent sexism, gender role ideology condition, and response condition was not reliable, $t(174)=.63$, $p=.53$, indicating that the relationship between gender role ideology condition and

benevolent sexism did not depend on the target's behavioural response (response vs. no response) ($f^2=.15$ for model). As such, there was no evidence for the hypothesis that relied on the 3-way interaction (not supporting H2, while supporting H4). Collapsing across the target's behaviour, then, we assessed the evidence for H1 and H3. Simple slopes analyses for the significant BS* ideology condition interaction revealed that higher benevolent sexism was associated with more positive impressions of the woman supporting traditional gender roles (cancellation of the cooking programme), $b=.24$, $SE=.11$, $t(174)=2.13$, $p=.04$, confirming H3 (and replicating Study 2). By contrast, benevolent sexism did not influence perceptions of the woman in the non-traditional gender role ideology condition, $b=-.11$, $SE=.11$, $t(174)=-1.11$, $p=.27$, and as such there was no support for H1 (replicating Study 2, but not Study 1).

Similar patterns were found with the additional measured variables, supporting H3 and H4, but not H1 or H2. Regression results are provided in Table 3, and simple slope and graphs of these variables are included in the Supplemental Material Online. As with the impression variable, the simple slopes of the traditional gender role condition were reliable and positive, such that higher BS was associated with more positive impressions of the woman, while the slopes of the non-traditional gender role condition were all negative, but not reliable.

As an additional test of the hypotheses, regression analyses were rerun only for the woman who speaks out (e.g., the response condition). With a smaller sample ($n=83$) that limits power, a significant BS*Programme Ideology condition interaction was present for 4 of the 6 dependent variables (gender appropriateness, agree with reaction, helpful for women, shared values). Simple slopes demonstrate the same patterns reported in the full sample: BS increases support for the woman speaking out in the traditional ideology condition (reliable simple slope

for all variables), and has no effect in the non-traditional condition (not reliable for all variables). For the two variables in which the interaction was not reliable (impression: $p=.26$ and empathy: $p=.16$), the pattern of the simple slopes was identical to the other variables (positive in the traditional condition and not reliable in the non-traditional condition). These additional analyses demonstrate that high BS women can approve of women who speak out, under certain circumstances (e.g., when it is in defence of traditional gender roles). Additional information on these analyses are provided in the Supplemental Materials Online.

Discussion

Study 3 demonstrates that, under certain conditions, high BS women can be persuaded to support women who speak up and act agentially, *if* the woman in question supports traditional gender roles. Indeed, benevolent sexist women support all in-group members who endorse traditional gender roles when perceiving a gender-based threat (H1), regardless of the behaviour they use to do so (responding or not). The behaviour was less influential in shaping their support compared to the expressed gender role beliefs. As such, under some circumstances, benevolent sexists drop their objections to agentic non-role conforming behaviour in the face of gender threat, behaviour which is normally considered counter-stereotypical for women. As in Study 2, benevolent sexism was mostly robustly associated with women's impressions of ingroup members who *support* traditional gender roles, but less so with those who challenge these roles. For high BS women, other women can act agentially and challenge a male perpetrator in the face of gender-based threat, or choose not to, as long as they are expressing support for traditional ideologies. The lack of moderation of the two-way interaction between BS and

program ideology by the target's behaviour was somewhat surprising. It was possible that high BS women, even in supporting women who speak out for traditional roles, would have most preferred women to stay silent (replicating Study 1). Instead, however, they showed no preference based on the behaviour itself (responding or not), but were most driven by the underlying ideology being communicated. Expressing support for traditional gender roles was enough to buffer derogation and engender similar levels of support as the woman who stayed silent.

General Discussion

Across three studies, women's attitudes towards other women's responses to gender-based threat were shaped by benevolent sexism, and the underlying gender role ideology being expressed. Study 1 finds that high BS women reject agentic responses (confrontation) of group-based threat (sexism) that challenges traditional values, and support behaviour that does not challenge it. However, Study 2 shows that this derogation does not extend to a similarly agentic action that instead upholds traditional gender roles. That is, Study 2 demonstrates that high BS women will support a woman confronting and acting agentially, if her actions serve to promote traditional gender roles. Study 3 confirms that it is less about the specific behaviour enacted (women acting agentially or not) but rather about the ideology being promoted. High BS women will support both types of behavioural responses, even non-gender role conforming ones such as speaking out, and not derogate the woman, so long as traditional gender relations are being valued. In addition to their overall impression of the woman, the positive evaluations of the woman in Studies 2 and 3 also included how appropriate women perceived her behaviour to be, how much they agreed with her reaction, how helpful they perceived her actions were toward

other women, their shared values with the woman, and their empathy toward her (see Tables 2 and 3 and supplemental analyses). In sum, then, BS is not necessarily always related to critical attitudes toward women's agentic behaviour in response to group-based threat, but can under some circumstances also inspire *support for* such behaviour, depending on the gender ideology it supports.

There were a number of additional aspects of the findings that are worth noting. First, these studies suggest that benevolent sexism is most robustly associated with women's impressions of women who *support* traditional gender roles (effects in all 3 studies), but less so with impressions of in-group members who challenge these roles (effects in Study 1 only). Although this is somewhat surprising, is worth emphasizing that, in Studies 2 and 3, the agentic response was done on behalf of someone else. The study manipulation introduced a mother who challenged the cancellation of a girls after-school club (science/home economics) on behalf of her daughter. Confrontation and agentic responses are considered more palatable when they are done on behalf of others (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Drury & Kaiser, 2014) than when they are 'self-interested'. Additionally, motherhood is perceived as a traditional role for women (e.g., Glick, Diebold, Bailey-Werner, & Zhu, 1997). In fact, a mother standing up for her child is one of the very few cultural narratives that celebrates assertiveness by women (Traister, 2019). In this case, the non-traditional woman defends the science class (non-traditional), but is still a mother, arguing on behalf of her child. This issue may have reduced the objections to the non-traditional woman amongst benevolent sexists, and been responsible for the absence of an effect for the non-traditional woman in Studies 2 and 3. In contrast, in Study 1, the agentic response

occurred within a workplace involving a business woman, which represents a gender role-challenging, non-traditional environment towards which BS women could more strongly reject.

An additional, and related, issue is that the effects of BS on impressions of traditional women seem to be driven mainly by women who score *low* on BS. In the figures, high BS women do not seem to differentiate between the traditional and non-traditional women, but as BS decreases, people become especially critical of women who engage in behaviours to reinforce the gender hierarchy. In other words, when speaking out supports traditional gender roles, this does not so much remove objections amongst high BS women but rather *introduces* objections amongst low BS women (who would normally be expected to support women's agentic behaviour). To some extent, this response pattern might be a result of the fact that the non-traditional conditions showed no effects in Studies 2 and 3. That is, perhaps if the manipulation of the non-traditional woman had been stronger, as in Study 1 with a female businesswoman reacting to an overtly sexist statement, effects amongst high BS women would have been more pronounced and differentiated between the traditional and non-traditional gender role conditions. Further, the type and manner of agentic behaviour varied between the studies, which may have also contributed to the lack of effects in the non-traditional conditions. Whereas Study 1 involved a direct agentic confrontation, that high BS women derogated, the agentic actions in Study 2 and 3 were more indirect (writing a letter) or tactful in approach. While still an agentic behaviour, this reserved approach to confrontation is often perceived better (Becker & Barreto, 2014; Hyers, 2010), and particularly could be for those high in BS. However, whichever end of the scale is driving the results here, these findings demonstrate a reversal in the relationship

between agentic behaviour and BS from what is normally reported in the literature, as a result of variations in the gender role ideology it supports.

Fewer effects were also found for BS on evaluations of women who confront for non-traditional reasons, where one would expect negative or ‘punishment’ effects. A possible explanation for the lack of derogation of women supporting non-traditional gender role ideologies could be due to the studies’ focus on benevolent, as opposed to hostile, sexism. Across studies, BS positively impacts the evaluation of women who act agentially in support of traditional reasons, which is in line with the idea that BS rewards traditionally-oriented women. Hostile Sexism (HS), instead, functions to punish deviant women (Glick & Fiske, 1996; 2001). Had HS been included as an additional predictor in the studies, there may have been more evidence of the ‘punishment’ side in the evaluation the non-traditional woman. Indeed, future work could examine the role of HS in punishing women who violate traditional gender roles.

Overall, this research makes important contributions to existing literature on agentic responses to gender-based threat and literature on benevolent sexism. First, prior research has not examined how benevolent sexism might moderate women’s judgements of other women’s responses to gender-based threat. Thus, it provides the first evidence that BS increases support for women who stay silent in response to sexism, and derogate those who agentially respond against it. Second, research on benevolent sexism tends to associate it with prescriptions for women’s submissive and demure attitudes. Our findings clarify that this does not necessarily mean that women who endorse benevolent sexism cannot support non-gender role conforming agentic actions, so long as they serve to uphold the status quo. High BS women do not necessarily prefer submission and can instead support supposedly ‘unfeminine’ actions toward

which they are normally opposed. Similarly, lower BS is not always associated with support for challenging gender-based threat, but can also be associated with a *lack* of support, namely when actions endorse traditional gender role beliefs. These findings help to disentangle whether women who stand up to sexism are derogated because of their agentic behaviour, or because of the traditional or non-traditional ideologies being disputed. Next, these findings provide further evidence that benevolent sexism should be seen as a system justifying belief (Brady et al., 2015; Jost & Kay, 2005); BS predicts support for behaviour that reinforces traditional gender roles and gender hierarchies, serving to uphold the status quo. Finally, the intragroup focus on women's reactions to other women's behaviours provides an important and often less studied perspective of ingroup support for confrontation. Forming a united coalition of ingroup members facilitates collective action (van Zomeren et al., 2008), and this paper highlights one potential barrier toward that goal that many women endorse--benevolent sexism.

It is important to note some limitations of these studies. First, the manipulations of traditional and non-traditional gender role ideologies were subtle, and may have benefitted from more direct framing. For instance, traditional gender role ideologies were manipulated in Studies 2 and 3 by having women express support for a girls' cooking club. Although manipulation checks confirmed that participants understood the non-traditional versus traditional role implications of the manipulation, results may have been more in line with hypotheses (e.g. with regards to attitudes towards progressive women) had the manipulations been stronger. Further, methodological choices required that benevolent sexism be measured prior to the confrontation scenario. While distractor items were included to introduce a very limited amount of temporal distancing, and BS largely did not vary between experimental conditions, there is still the

possibility that BS was primed while evaluating the scenario (and by distractor items regarding gender). This may have made such concerns about gender roles more salient across conditions, having a larger effect on overall evaluations. Future research may wish to further separate the measurement of BS and experimental manipulations across measurement sessions. Further, across studies, we defined the woman's response as agentic, due to her deliberative actions to speak up against the male perpetrator. It is possible that, under certain circumstances, one may remain agentially silent or confront without an intentional decision to do so (e.g., a reflexive response). Future research could fully disentangle agency in decisionmaking from response type.

This work was also unable to look at the interaction of race and gender on the outcomes of interest (e.g., see McMahon & Kahn, 2015), given that the sample was composed mostly of White women. Relatedly, future work might fruitfully include male participants (Fiske & Glick, 2001). The person being confronted was always a man in these studies, which is a common situation involving gender-based dynamics. That said, women do support traditional ideologies and both endorse and actively promote traditional gender roles as well. It could be speculated that, in our studies, the fact that it is a man's actions that the woman is responding to should be more against what is appropriate for a woman to do for high BS women. It should be harder for high BS women to support this action, but they still do if the agentic action serves to promote traditional gender roles. Future research could examine women agentially challenging an ingroup member and how support varies by benevolent sexist ideologies.

Conclusions. Across 3 studies, this research demonstrates that benevolent sexism is not necessarily associated with critical attitudes towards women's agentic responses against gender-based threat, but can sometimes *increase* support for such behaviour, namely when it supports

traditional gender role ideologies. Similarly, low BS is not always associated with support for speaking out against sexism, but can also be associated with a *lack* of support, namely when it endorses traditional gender role beliefs. Indeed, the relationship between benevolent sexism and attitudes towards women is determined mostly by the gender role ideology the person expresses in response to bias, rather than by the behaviour they use to do so.

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Figures and Tables

Table 1. *Full Results Study 1*

Study 1 Variables	Impression	Gender
		Appropriate
Constant	5.36 (.11)**	2.87 (.13)**
Response Condition	-.03 (.16)	1.04 (.20)**
Benevolent Sexism	.22 (.09)*	.22 (.11)+
Response Condition*BS	-.42 (.13)**	-.35 (.16)*

Note: Table provides *b* and (*SE*) for each variable. + $p < .1$, * = $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Figure 1. Impression of target as a function of benevolent sexism (centred) and target's behaviour (Study 1).

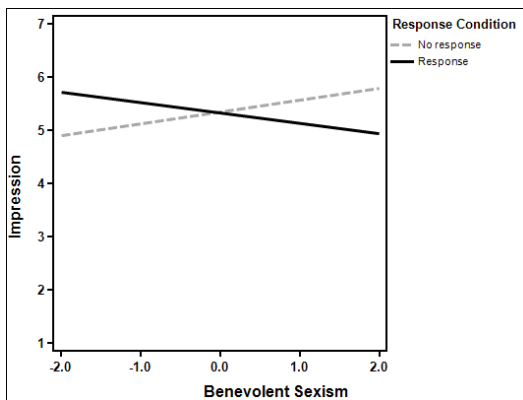


Table 2. Full Results Study 2

Study 2 Variables	Impression	Gender	Agree	Helpful for	Shared	Empathy
		Appropriate	Reaction	Women	Values	
Constant	4.70 (.10)**	2.56 (.12)**	2.34 (.12)**	3.49 (.16)**	2.24 (.12)**	4.29 (.19)**
Ideology Condition	.74 (.15)**	1.19 (.17)**	1.20 (.17)**	2.13 (.22)**	1.35 (.17)**	1.14 (.27)**
Benevolent Sexism	.47 (.08)**	.72 (.09)**	.60 (.09)**	.92 (.12)**	.68 (.09)**	.64 (.15)**
Condition*BS	-.38 (.12)**	-.69 (.13)**	-.65 (.13)**	-1.00 (.18)**	-.76 (.14)**	-.71 (.22)**

Note: Table provides *b* and (*SE*) for each variable. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Figure 2. Impression as a function of benevolent sexism (centred) and gender role ideology condition.

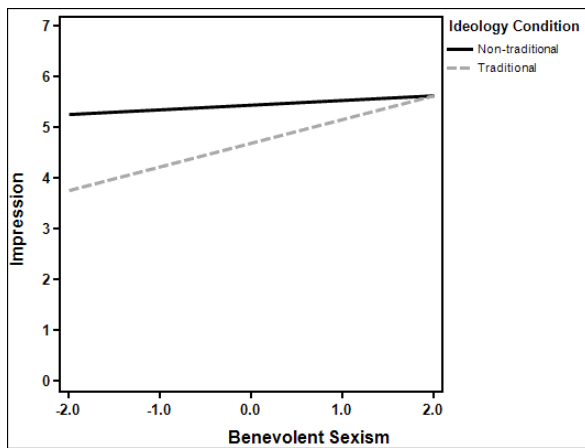
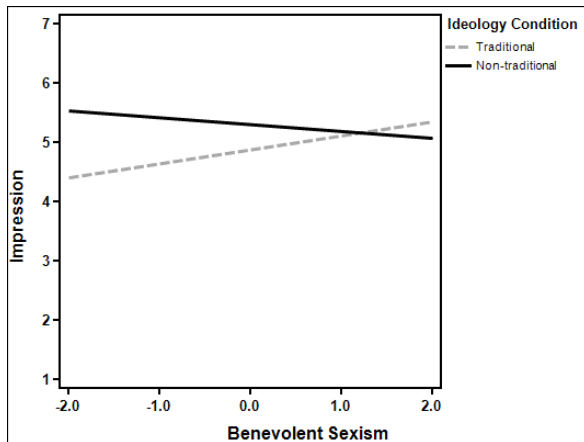


Table 3. Full Results Study 3

Study 3 Variables	Impression	Gender Appropriate	Agree Reaction	Helpful for Women	Shared Values	Empathy
Constant	4.87 (.13)**	2.70 (.14)**	2.73 (.16)**	4.07 (.19)**	2.70 (.16)**	5.02 (.20)**
Benevolent Sexism	.24 (.11)*	.41 (.12)**	.45 (.13)**	.73 (.17)**	.49 (.14)**	.37 (.17)*
Response Condition	-.28 (.20)	.07 (.21)	-.11 (.24)	-.26 (.29)	-.15 (.24)	-.33 (.31)
Ideology Condition	.44 (.19)*	.65 (.21)**	.84 (.22)**	.75 (.28)**	.80 (.23)**	.74 (.29)*
BS*Response	.05 (.17)	-.06 (.18)	.04 (.20)	-.03 (.24)	-.06 (.20)	.03 (.26)
BS*Ideology	-.35 (.15)*	-.52 (.17)**	-.62 (.18)**	-.98 (.22)**	-.69 (.18)**	-.40 (.24)+
Response* Ideology	.20 (.28)	.34 (.31)	.14 (.33)	.74 (.41)+	.17 (.34)	.15 (.44)
BS*Ideology*Response	.15 (.24)	.11 (.26)	.08 (.28)	.30 (.35)	.16 (.29)	-.04 (.37)

Note: Table provides *b* and (*SE*) for each variable. + $p < .1$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Figure 3. Impression of the target as a function of benevolent sexism (centred) and gender role ideology condition.



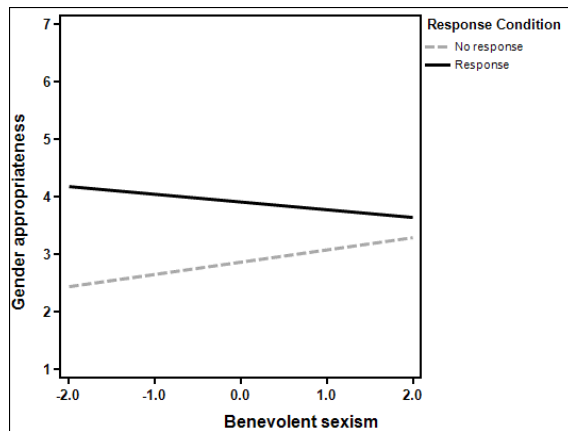
Supplemental Material Online

Study materials, data, and syntax associated with these studies can be viewed at

https://osf.io/bng7t/?view_only=c6ee5dbff0964814b2dcee4d9bd4198a.

Study 1 Supplemental Analyses

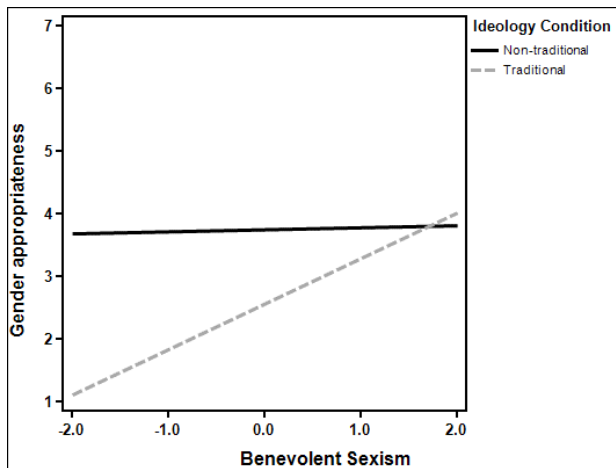
Gender Appropriateness



$f^2=.29$ for model. The simple slope of the non-response condition was marginally positive, $b=.22$, $SE=.11$, $t(115)=1.91$, $p=.058$, and the simple slope of the confrontation condition was not reliable, $b=-.14$, $SE=.11$, $t(115)=1.28$, $p=.20$.

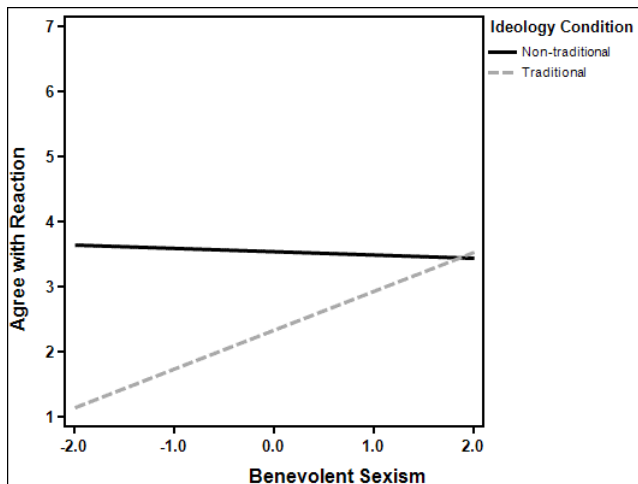
Study 2 Supplemental Analyses

Gender Appropriateness



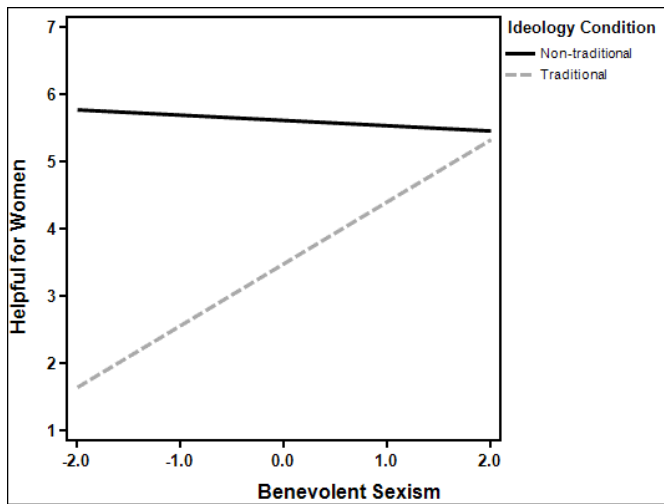
$f^2=.79$ for model. The simple slope of the traditional ideology condition was reliable and positive, $b=.72$, $SE=.09$, $t(136)=7.90$, $p<.001$, and the simple slope of the non-traditional ideology condition was not reliable, $b=.03$, $SE=.10$, $t(136)=.34$, $p=.74$.

Agree with Reaction



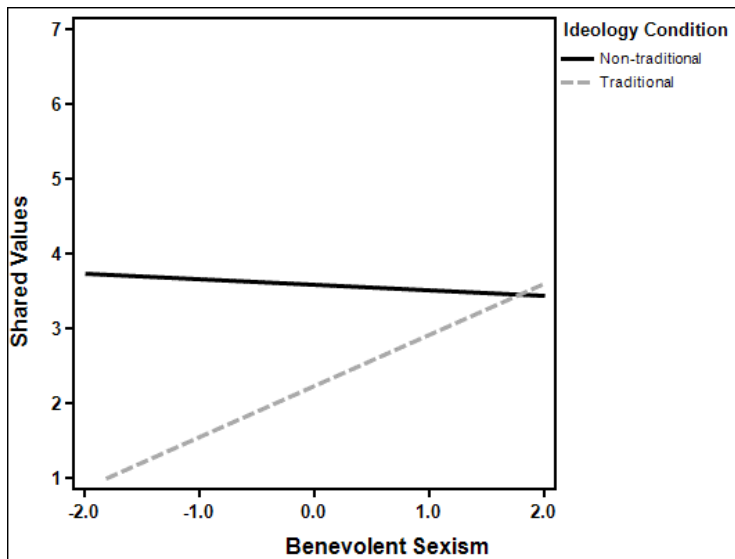
$f^2=.70$ for model. The simple slope of the traditional ideology condition was reliable and positive, $b=.60$, $SE=.09$, $t(136)=6.70$, $p<.001$, while the simple slope of the non-traditional ideology condition was not reliable, $b=-.05$, $SE=.09$, $t(136)=-.53$, $p=.60$.

Helpful for Women



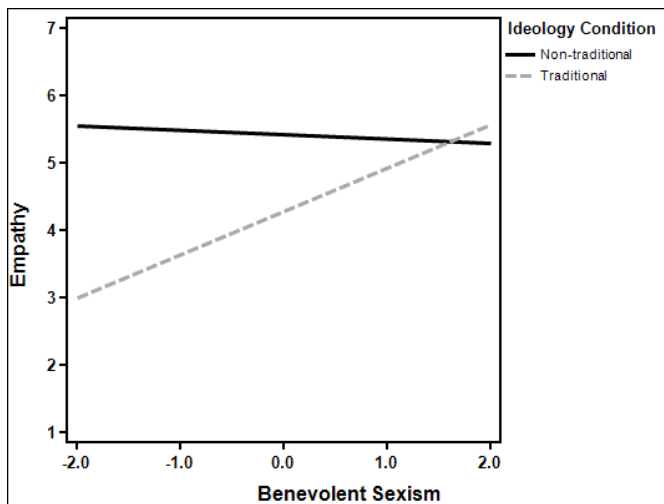
$f^2=1.07$ for model. The simple slope of the traditional condition was reliable and positive, $b=.92$, $SE=.12$, $t(136)=7.64$, $p<.001$, while the simple slope of the non-traditional ideology condition was not reliable, $b=-.08$, $SE=.13$, $t(136)= -.65$, $p=.52$.

Shared Values



$f^2=.82$ for model. The simple slope of the traditional ideology condition was reliable and positive, $b=.68$, $SE=.09$, $t(136)=7.29$, $p<.001$, while the simple slope of the non-traditional ideology condition was not reliable, $b=-.08$, $SE=.10$, $t(136)= -.76$, $p=.45$.

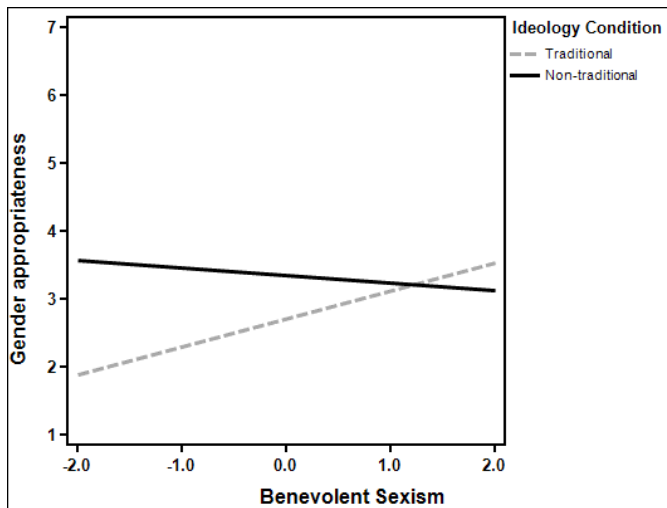
Empathy



$f^2=.26$ for model. The simple slope of the traditional ideology condition was reliable and positive, $b=.64$, $SE=.15$, $t(136)=4.34$, $p<.001$, while the simple slope of the non-traditional ideology condition was not reliable, $b=-.06$, $SE=.16$, $t(136)= -.40$, $p=.69$.

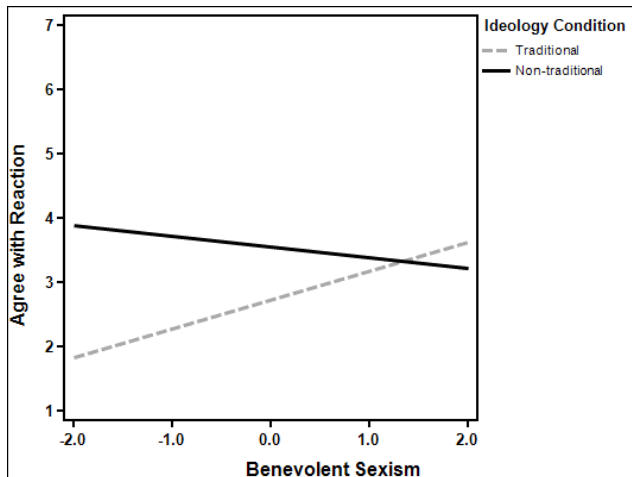
Study 3 Supplemental Analyses

Gender Appropriateness



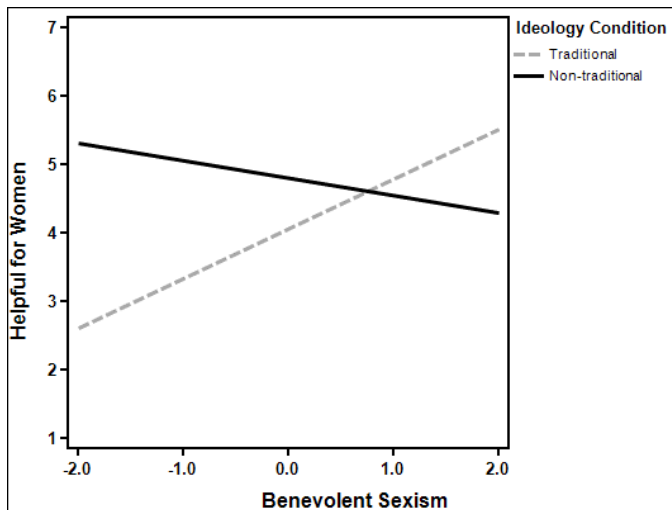
$f^2=.28$ for model. The simple slope in the traditional ideology condition was reliable and positive, $b=.41$, $SE=.12$, $t(174)=3.36$, $p<.001$. The simple slope in the non-traditional ideology condition was not reliable, $b=-.11$, $SE=.11$, $t(174)=-.99$, $p=.33$.

Agree with Reaction



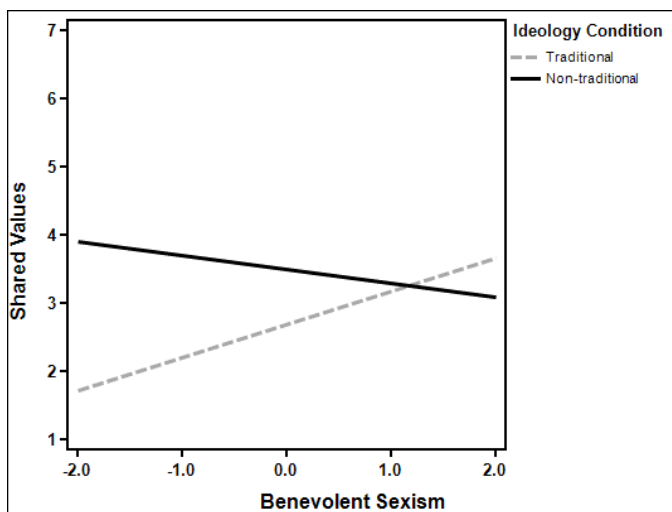
$f^2=.28$ for model. The simple slope in the traditional ideology condition was reliable and positive, $b=.45$, $SE=.13$, $t(174)=3.37$, $p<.001$. The simple slope in the non-traditional ideology condition was not reliable, $b=-.17$, $SE=.12$, $t(174)=-1.37$, $p=.17$.

Helpful for Women



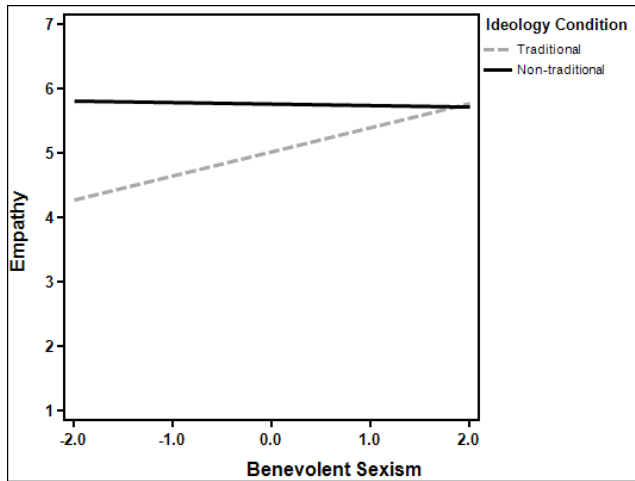
$f^2=.37$ for model. The simple slope in the traditional ideology condition was reliable and positive, $b=.73$, $SE=.16$, $t(174)=4.41$, $p<.001$. The simple slope in the non-traditional ideology condition was negative and marginally reliable, $b=-.25$, $SE=.15$, $t(174)=-1.66$, $p=.098$.

Shared Values



$f^2=.28$ for model. The simple slope in the traditional ideology condition was reliable and positive, $b=.49$, $SE=.13$, $t(174)=3.62$, $p<.001$. The simple slope in the non-traditional ideology condition was negative and marginally reliable, $b=-.20$, $SE=.12$, $t(174)=-1.66$, $p=.099$.

Empathy



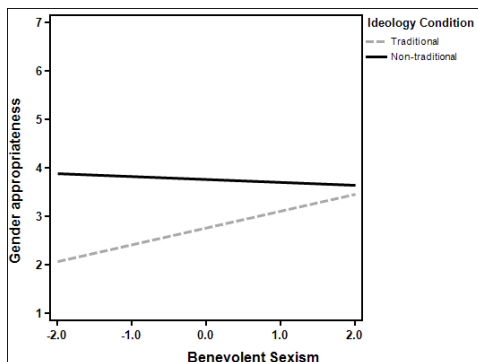
$f^2=.11$ for model. The simple slope in the traditional ideology condition was reliable and positive, $b=.37$, $SE=.17$, $t(174)=2.15$, $p<.05$. The simple slope in the non-traditional ideology condition was not reliable, $b=-.02$, $SE=.16$, $t(174)=-.14$, $p=.89$.

Study 3 Additional Analyses, Response condition only (n=83)

Study 3 Variables	<i>Impression</i>	<i>Gender Appropriate</i>	<i>Agree Reaction</i>	<i>Helpful for Women</i>	<i>Shared Values</i>	<i>Empathy</i>
Constant	4.60 (.15)**	2.78 (.17)**	2.62 (.18)**	3.81 (.22)**	2.55 (.19)**	4.69 (.25)**
Ideology Condition	.64 (.20)**	.99 (.23)**	.97 (.26)**	1.49 (.30)**	.97 (.26)**	.89 (.34)*
Benevolent Sexism	.29 (.12)*	.35 (.13)*	.49 (.15)**	.69 (.18)**	.43 (.15)**	.41 (.20)*
Condition*BS	-.20 (.18)	-.41 (.20)*	-.54 (.23)*	-.68 (.27)*	-.53 (.23)*	-.43 (.30)

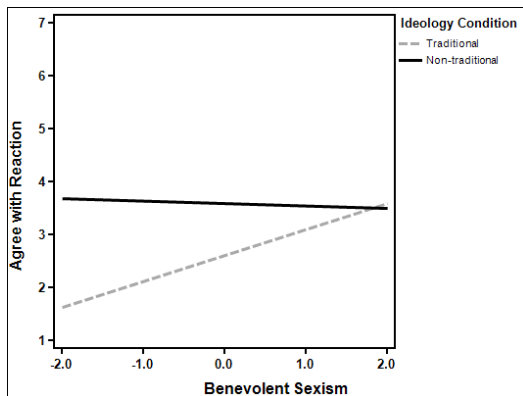
Note: Table provides b and (SE) for each variable. * $p<.05$, ** $p<.01$

Gender Appropriateness, Response condition only (n=83)



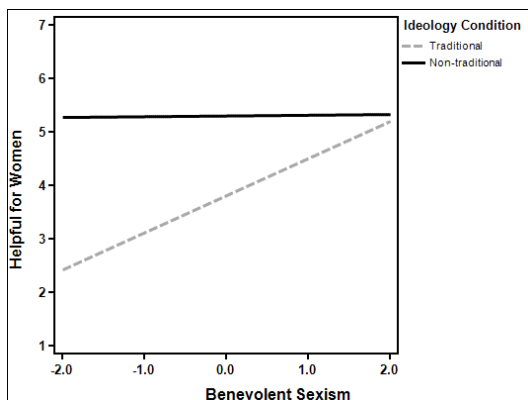
$f^2=.29$ for model. The simple slope in the traditional ideology condition was reliable and positive, $b=.35$, $SE=.13$, $t(79)=2.61$, $p<.05$. The simple slope in the non-traditional ideology condition was not reliable, $b=-.06$, $SE=.15$, $t(79)=-.42$, $p=.68$.

Agree with Reaction, Response condition only (n=83)



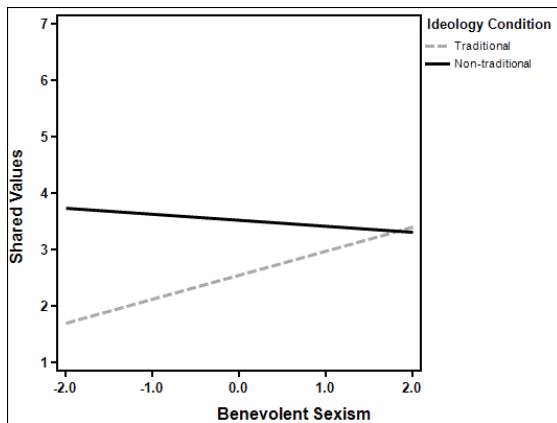
$f^2=.28$ for model. The simple slope in the traditional ideology condition was reliable and positive, $b=.49$, $SE=.15$, $t(79)=3.30$, $p<.01$. The simple slope in the non-traditional ideology condition was not reliable, $b=-.04$, $SE=.17$, $t(79)=-.26$, $p=.80$.

Helpful for Women, Response condition only (n=83)



$f^2=.43$ for model. The simple slope in the traditional ideology condition was reliable and positive, $b=.69$, $SE=.18$, $t(79)=3.94$, $p<.01$. The simple slope in the non-traditional ideology condition was not reliable, $b=.01$, $SE=.20$, $t(79)=.07$, $p=.95$.

Shared Values, Response condition only (n=83)



$f^2=.25$ for model. The simple slope in the traditional ideology condition was reliable and positive, $b=.43$, $SE=.15$, $t(79)=2.82$, $p<.01$. The simple slope in the non-traditional ideology condition was not reliable, $b=-.11$, $SE=.17$, $t(79)=-.61$, $p=.54$.