

When chivalry backfires: benevolent sexism and attitudes toward myra hindley essa...

[Sociology](#), [Women](#)



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Article Summary II

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Focus of the article

The article by Viki, Massey, & Masser, (2005) showcases how paternalistic attitudes towards female offenders may influence people's perception of the crime. The authors prove that benevolent sexism turns hostile, when the female offenders commit crimes that defy the gender stereotypes. This paper uses the example of Myra Hindley, a criminal, who along with her accomplice murdered children, made videos of the murders, and disposed the dead bodies. The crime committed by Ms. Hindley defied the gender stereotype (women as caregivers and mothers) and quite expectedly the public opinion was generally hostile towards her. The authors conducted a study to show the effects of gender bias on the benevolent sexism and hostile sexism, and how that affects views towards Myra Hindley's case.

Previous research by Glick & Fiske, (2001) suggests that Benevolent sexism and hostile sexism are actually complementary ideologies that continue to

propagate paternalistic oppression of women. On the other hand, Viki & Abrams, (2002) showed that benevolent sexism may have positive as well as negative ramifications on women, as seen in the case of rape victims. This is an empirical paper, where the authors conducted a study on 123 participants (87 females and 35 males) to understand the relationship between Gender bias and the type of opinion towards women criminals like Myra Hindley. The authors hypothesized that due to ambivalent sexism Benevolent sexism and not hostile sexism would be related to the negative evaluation of Ms. Hindley's crimes. Since Myra Hindley's crimes broke the gender stereotype that women are caregivers and should not be harming children, benevolent sexism would most likely be the root cause behind negative views about Hindley's crimes.

Opinion

This is an empirical study that hypothesizes a relationship between benevolent sexism and negative views about a female criminal, who committed an offence deviating from common gender stereotypes. The authors conducted a questionnaire based study on 123 participants chosen randomly and correlated their benevolent sexism scores along with their reactions to the acts committed by a female criminal. The study showcases that benevolent sexism is not a male trait, on the contrary, women participants also display significant gender bias. The authors conclusively showcase that sexism can have significant effects on the outcome of cases where female criminals are involved. This study provides conclusive evidence that such gender biases can creep into the minds of jurors, judges

and the public in general and have long lasting impacts on society. However although the authors diagnose the problem with the modern judiciary, they do not propose any methods by which such biases can be eliminated.

Conclusion

Consistent with their hypothesis, the authors found that the negative perceptions about Myra Hindley was mostly associated with benevolent sexism. More significantly, participants who ranked high or low on the scale of benevolent sexism were also more likely to have higher or lower degree of negative views towards Hindley's acts respectively.

This study is strongly related to the realms of health psychology as the gender bias of benevolent sexism, transcends the courtroom and must have significant impacts on other facets of life. Benevolent sexism, may affect office relationships, women's self-esteem and various other issues, which finally transcend into the field of psychology. The significant bias against women in the form of benevolent or hostile sexism may have impacts on the psychological welfare of several women and therefore this paper should be considered a valuable addition to this field.

References

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