

SHOULD WOMEN RETURN HOME? THE INTERACTIVE EFFECTS OF SEXISM AND ECONOMIC CONFIDENCE

QIONG LI AND DUAN HUANG
Wuhan Institute of Physical Education
MIAO CUI
Ningxia University

A proposal for women to return to their traditional role of staying at home has often been offered in serious economic situations (Han & Yuan, 2008). This may suggest that the overall economic situation may affect people's attitudes toward women being in paid employment outside the home. Glick and Fiske (1996) identified two components of sexism: *hostile sexism* (HS) and *benevolent sexism* (BS), which are present in both men and women. Because it justifies the male power structure, sexism may also affect this attitude toward women. In this study we have examined the relationship between sexism and attitude toward women resuming their traditional role of staying at home, and the moderating effects of economic confidence.

Participants ($N = 501$; 251 men and 250 women) were recruited from five universities in China, and during class time anonymously completed measures of sexism, economic confidence, and attitude toward women returning home. Sexism was assessed using a modified version of the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI) developed by Glick and Fiske (1996), which has an HS 7-item subscale and a BS 5-item subscale. The internal consistencies were 0.77 for HS and 0.67 for BS. Economic confidence was measured by a 12-item scale with an internal consistency of 0.89. Finally, participants were asked to evaluate to what extent they agreed with the proposal that women return home. Each response was made on a 6-point scale.

Qiong Li and Duan Huang, College of Health Science, Wuhan Institute of Physical Education; Miao Cui, Department of Psychology, Ningxia University.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to: Duan Huang, College of Health Science, Wuhan Institute of Physical Education, 461 Luoyu Road, Wuhan, Hubei 430079, People's Republic of China. Email: yellow5982008@163.com

Women had a more negative attitude than did men about women returning home, $t(494) = 9.97, p < .01$. The results of hierarchical multiple regression analysis showed that HS was related to the attitude of women about women returning home, $b = .141, t(239) = 2.20, p < .05, \eta^2 = .21$, while BS was related to the attitude of men about women returning home, $b = .201, t(242) = 3.02, p < .01, \eta^2 = .25$. Economic confidence had a moderating effect on the relationship between HS and the attitude of women about women returning home, $b = -.126, t(239) = -1.93, p < .05, \eta^2 = -.20$. As shown in Figure 1, analysis of the simple slopes indicated that HS had a stronger impact on attitude toward women returning home when economic confidence was one standard deviation below the mean, $b = .235, t(239) = 2.64, p < .01$, than when economic confidence was one standard deviation above the mean $b = .001, t(239) = .01, p > .10$. When economic confidence was low, women who were lower in HS would object more to women returning home. A similar moderating effect was not found for the male participants.

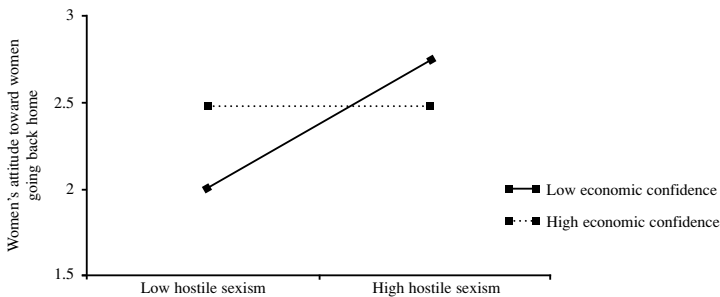


Figure 1. Interaction between hostile sexism and economic confidence in relation to women's attitude toward women going back home.

Results showed men high in BS and women high in HS are more likely to have a positive attitude about women returning home.

Keywords: benevolent sexism, hostile sexism, gender differentiation, economic confidence.

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