Abstract

Although sexist attitudes are generally thought to undermine support for employment equity (EE) policies supporting women, we argue that one form of sexism – benevolent sexism – may actually increase support for EE policies by invoking a sense of compassion. In a correlational study (Study 1) where we measured benevolent sexism and an experiment where we primed benevolent sexist stereotypes (Study 2), we show that benevolent sexism is related to greater support for an EE policy and that this effect is mediated by compassion. In Study 3, we identify a key boundary condition of the positive effect of benevolent sexism: the type of position for which EE policies promote the hiring of women. In particular, we find that the positive effect of benevolent sexism on support for the EE policy via compassion extends only to EE policies that promote the hiring of women in more feminine, and not in more masculine, positions. Thus while benevolent sexism may promote EE policies and appear to promote gender equality, it may subtly undermine it by potentially contributing to occupational gender segregation.

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Ivona’s main areas of research include gender and cultural diversity and equality in the workplace and emotions and emotion regulation in the workplace. Her research has been published in top-tier refereed journals such as Academy of Management Journal, Journal of Applied Psychology, Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, and Psychological Science. Her research has also received numerous awards such as Best Paper awards from the OB section at the Academy of Management and the Canadian Psychological Association. Her research has been featured in media outlets such as the Wall Street Journal, the Globe and Mail, the Huffington Post, the Record, and Men’s Health Magazine, among others. Ivona is also a member of Editorial Board of a leading journal in emotion research: Emotion.

All interested are welcome.