

# Hostile and Benevolent Reactions Toward Pregnant Women: Complementary Interpersonal Punishments and Rewards That Maintain Traditional Roles

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A naturalistic field study investigated behavior toward pregnant (vs. nonpregnant) women in nontraditional (job applicant) and traditional (store customer) roles. Female confederates, who sometimes wore a pregnancy prosthesis, posed as job applicants or customers at retail stores. Store employees exhibited more hostile behavior (e.g., rudeness) toward pregnant (vs. nonpregnant) applicants and more benevolent behavior (e.g., touching, overfriendliness) toward pregnant (vs. nonpregnant) customers. A second experiment revealed that pregnant women are especially likely to encounter hostility (from both men and women) when applying for masculine as compared with feminine jobs. The combination of benevolence toward pregnant women in traditional roles and hostility toward those who seek nontraditional roles suggests a system of complementary interpersonal rewards and punishments that may discourage pregnant women from pursuing work that violates gender norms.

*Keywords:* discrimination, pregnancy, women, sexism

Pregnant women have been venerated in cultural images ranging from ancient fertility goddess statues and medieval paintings of the Virgin Mary to modern-day advertising. As the epitome of the traditional female role (which casts bearing children as a woman's essential function), pregnant women ought, according to ambivalent sexism theory (Glick & Fiske, 1996, 2001), to be recipients of benevolently sexist feelings (paternalistic affection) and behavior (e.g., help and protection). Indeed, pregnant women are viewed as more childlike and in need of assistance, and they therefore receive more help on common adult tasks and are "taken care of" more often than are nonpregnant women (Walton et al. 1988; Wolkind & Zajicek, 1981). Yet, pregnant women may also be targets of hostility, which can be construed as traditionally sexist attitudes manifested as rudeness and unfriendliness. Preliminary research

has demonstrated that pregnant women face such traditional forms of discrimination in employment decisions. For instance, people who viewed a videotape of a working woman rated her as less competent and less suitable for a promotion (Halpert, Wilson, & Hickman, 1993) and were less likely to recommend hiring her (Bragger, Kutcher, Morgan, & Firth, 2002) when she wore a pregnancy prosthesis than when she performed identical work without it.

The goal of the current research is to understand the conditions under which pregnant women may encounter benevolent and hostile reactions. Drawing from ambivalent sexism and role congruity theories, we propose that pregnant women will experience different forms of sexism depending on the roles that they enact. Compared with nonpregnant women, pregnant women who engage in nontraditional or gender-incongruent behaviors (i.e., applying for a job) will encounter greater hostility and less benevolence than will those who engage in traditional behaviors (i.e., seeking help). We tested these expectations in a field experiment and with a more controlled survey paradigm to inform and extend ambivalent sexism theory and to provide the first behavioral evidence of ambivalent sexism toward pregnant women in real-world workplace contexts.

## Ambivalent Sexism

Ambivalent sexism theory can explain why pregnant women might be subjected to hostility or benevolence depending on their roles or the situational context (Glick & Fiske, 1996, 2001). This theory posits that men's greater structural power breeds hostility toward women who challenge the status quo, such as feminists and

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career women. At the same time, men's interdependence with women (because of sexual reproduction, heterosexuality, and kinship relations) fosters patronizing benevolence toward women who embrace traditional roles (e.g., stay-at-home mothers). Thus, pregnant women who defy traditional role expectations by working may elicit hostility, whereas pregnant women who enact a traditional role may evoke benevolence.

### *Hostile Reactions*

Consistent with this notion, hostility has been demonstrated toward pregnant women who work outside the home (Corse, 1990; Franco, Evans, Best, Zrull, & Pizza, 1983; Gueutal & Taylor, 1991; Halpert et al., 1993; Slonaker & Wendt, 1991). These results are especially significant given that 75% of women entering today's workforce will become pregnant at least once while they are employed, and a sizable portion of these women will be pregnant when they are applying for jobs (Cleveland, Stockdale, & Murphy, 2000).

There are a number of reasons why pregnant working women might elicit even greater levels of sexist hostility than do working women in general. According to Eagly and Karau's (2002) "role incongruity" model of prejudice, hostile prejudices are activated when a member of a social group attempts to enact a social role for which that group is stereotypically "mismatched." The visual cue of pregnancy evokes strong feminine stereotypes and highlights women's sexuality and reproductive function (Pattison & Gross, 1996; Sheppard, 1992; Taylor & Langer, 1977). Because pregnancy evokes the "traditional woman" category, in which women are stereotyped as less competent and more delicate than men, pregnant women are therefore likely to be viewed as ill suited for most jobs (Walton et al., 1988; Wolkind & Zajicek, 1981). That this reaction is especially strong toward pregnant women in management positions (Halpert & Burg, 1997; Swiss & Walker, 1993) is consistent with the role congruity explanation, because management positions are stereotyped as requiring high levels of competence and stereotypically masculine personality traits (Glick, Wilk, & Perreault, 1995).

Additionally, pregnant women who work might prime or make salient wider societal conflict over women's traditional child-rearing and contemporary work roles. Although the general idea of women working outside the home may no longer be controversial, there is considerable societal debate about whether mothers should work, especially when their children are young (e.g., Deutsch & Saxon, 1998, see Wilson, 2005, for a review). Symbolically, the pregnant worker may pose a threat to "traditional family values" among some perceivers, whereas pregnant women who do not work would implicitly affirm, rather than challenge, such values, eliciting a positive (rather than a negative) reaction (cf. Haddock & Zanna, 1994).

Pregnant workers might also be resented because they are expected to be less committed, to increase coworkers' workload, and to lower productivity. In fact, some pregnant women experience a reduced interest in their jobs (Hess–Strauthamer, 1985; Schultz & Henderson, 1985; Smith, 1999), are absent from the workforce for an extended period of time (Klerman & Leibowitz, 1999), and burden coworkers with extra work during their absence (Gueutal & Taylor, 1991). Legislation that protects pregnant women (e.g., Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990; Family and Medical

Leave Act of 1993; Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978) and company-wide family-friendly policies (e.g., on-site child-care centers) may unwittingly exacerbate resentment toward pregnant women by providing them with what some people may characterize as "special favors." Indeed, resentment of the "breaks" that women receive is a strong theme of both the Hostile Sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996) and Modern Sexism scales (Swim, Aiken, Hall, & Hunter, 1995).

### *Benevolent Reactions*

In nonwork contexts, particularly those that are consistent with traditional female roles (e.g., shopping), pregnant women may be particularly likely to evoke benevolent behaviors (e.g., the use of diminutive names, touching by strangers, and affectionate yet patronizing comments). The "benevolent" or paternalistic behaviors pregnant women receive may vary from being merely nice (e.g., greater attention) to harmful (e.g., patronizing evaluations that communicate low expectations and diminish women's performance; see Vescio, Gervais, Snyder, & Hoover, 2005). Even seemingly nice behaviors may be problematic if they are typically combined with interpersonal punishments (e.g., hostility) toward pregnant women who attempt to enact nontraditional roles, such as working outside the home (i.e., are part of a system of rewards and punishments that serves to discourage pregnant women from pursuing nontraditional roles). Although ambivalent sexism theorists (Glick & Fiske, 2001) have emphasized how sexist hostility and benevolence work together to reinforce women's traditional roles, past research has looked exclusively at attitudes toward traditional and nontraditional female subtypes (e.g., career women and homemakers; Glick, Diebold, Bailey–Werner, & Zhu, 1997) and not at actual behaviors in a naturalistic setting, which is the focus here.

### *Subtle Manifestations of Sexism*

Because of the current social climate and recent legislation, the manifestations of differential treatment of individuals in protected categories (e.g., the disabled, pregnant women, minority group members) may be increasingly subtle. To address this, Hebl, Foster, Mannix, and Dovidio (2002) differentiated between "formal" (overt) and "interpersonal" (subtle) discrimination. Formal discrimination includes explicit behaviors that are prohibited by law and/or those that are required of the job and necessary for task performance (e.g., discrimination in hiring or promotion; refusing to serve a customer). The Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978 prohibits formal discrimination against pregnant women in all federal jobs and in companies with 15 or more employees (Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990; Gardin & Richwald, 1986), creating powerful incentives for organizations to enforce policies prohibiting formal discrimination toward pregnant workers.

Unfortunately, when people suppress their discrimination in one arena, it may emerge in another (Macrae, Bodenhausen, Milne, & Jetten, 1994; Smart & Wegner, 1999). When formal discrimination is banned, biased behavior may be expressed through subtle, interpersonal cues (e.g., avoidance of eye contact, lack of warmth, shortened interaction length), referred to as "interpersonal discrimination" (Hebl et al., 2002; King, Shapiro, Hebl, Singletary, & Turner, 2006). Because laws do not regulate expressions of friendliness and collegiality, hostile interpersonal discrimination may be

displayed more freely than formal discrimination. Interpersonal discrimination has been repeatedly documented in reactions to members of stigmatized groups. For instance, store managers are less helpful, more standoffish, less interested, more likely to end the conversation prematurely, and more likely to avoid eye contact with gay and lesbian job applicants than with assumed heterosexual applicants (Hebl et al., 2002). Similarly, salespeople have shorter interactions; stand at a greater distance from; make less eye contact with; smile and nod less frequently at; and are less helpful, less friendly, and more rude toward obese customers compared with normal weight customers (King et al., 2006). Because of the recent legal mandates concerning formal discrimination toward pregnant women, interpersonal discrimination may be a much more sensitive indicator of hostile biases in occupational contexts.

Benevolent behaviors are, of course, not prohibited by law, and there is no formal discrimination counterpart to patronizing benevolent behavior. Even when patronizing, and demonstrated to have negative effects (e.g., Vescio et al., 2005), benevolent behaviors are inherently interpersonal and subtle. Whether a specific instance of such behavior can be labeled as discrimination (e.g., because it is patronizing and undermines the target's status) or mere niceness and politeness is likely to be a matter of debate. Although we believe that the behaviors studied here are patronizing and discriminatory (even if perpetrators and targets do not code them as such), this characterization is not necessary for our larger point that these behaviors ultimately encourage pregnant women to stay in traditional roles. When used in combination with hostile interpersonal behaviors that punish pregnant women for attempting to enact nontraditional roles, benevolent interpersonal behaviors that reward pregnant women who behave in a traditional manner can be considered as part of a coordinated system that promotes discriminatory outcomes. In this article, we consider both hostile and benevolent behaviors to be components of interpersonal discrimination.

### Overview of Predictions and Methods

We hypothesize that for interpersonal behaviors, pregnant (as compared with nonpregnant) women will encounter greater benevolence when they enact traditionally feminine roles but greater hostility when they pursue nontraditional roles. Thus, our main prediction entails a three-way interaction between pregnancy status, role, and type of behavior (hostile, benevolent). We also expect significant differences in how pregnant women are treated when comparing across different roles. Specifically, we predict that when pregnant women pursue traditional (as compared with nontraditional) roles, they will elicit greater benevolence, but that when pregnant women pursue nontraditional (as compared with traditional) roles, they will elicit greater hostility. Concerning behaviors that constitute formal discrimination, pregnant women are not expected to be treated differently from their nonpregnant counterparts, nor do we expect differences in how pregnant women are treated in traditional and nontraditional roles.

In Study 1, the role manipulation was accomplished by having visibly pregnant versus nonpregnant confederates apply for jobs (nontraditional role) versus act as customers (traditional role) at retail stores. Thus, we expected that pregnant job applicants would encounter greater hostility than would both nonpregnant female job applicants and pregnant customers, whereas pregnant custom-

ers would experience greater benevolence than would both nonpregnant female customers and pregnant job applicants. This research is the first that we know of to examine coordinated hostile and benevolent behaviors that punish pregnant women for seeking a nontraditional role and reward them for remaining in a traditional role, and to do so in a naturalistic setting. Because, as a field study, Study 1 did not systematically vary the type of job to which women applied, Study 2 examined working adults' reactions to fictitious pregnant or nonpregnant job applicants for a variety of masculine and feminine jobs. This manipulation tested the expectation that pregnant job applicants are especially likely to elicit hostile reactions when they apply for stereotypically masculine (vs. feminine) jobs, because of perceived gender role incongruity. The two studies complement each other by first showing whether ambivalently sexist behaviors toward pregnant women spontaneously occur in actual workplace settings and then examining the generalizability of hostility toward pregnant job applicants across different types of jobs.

## Study 1

### *Method*

#### *Participants, Confederates, and Observers*

The participants were 93 female and 17 male employees of retail stores in large shopping malls. Sixteen women between the ages of 20 and 32 and affiliated with a university in Texas acted as pregnant and nonpregnant confederates. This large number of confederates was used so that we could generalize our results across a wide variety of women's appearances. An additional 5 male and 10 female students served as interaction observers. Each confederate/observer pair entered between 4 and 14 stores. Confederates engaged in 110 interactions, 43 as job applicants and 67 as customers. An additional 6 coders, naïve to the purpose of the study, listened to interaction audiotapes and rated verbal measures of discrimination. Coders could not rate 14 interactions because of the poor quality of some tapes (e.g., background noise interfered with the conversation, store employees did not speak loud enough, the purses with the tape recorder were held in a way that muffled the recording); hence, coder ratings could be analyzed for only 96 interactions (36 involving confederate job applicants and 60 involving confederate customers).

#### *Procedure*

*Confederate and observer training.* Both confederates and observers signed an informed consent form that asked them to act professionally and with sensitivity throughout the trials. Before conducting the study, confederates repeatedly wore the pregnancy prostheses until they felt comfortable in them. They also memorized and practiced delivering a verbal script (described in detail later) and engaged in mock interactions several times with the study coordinator. Observers were trained in how they would enter, behave, observe, and leave each store. Observers were taught to enter before and depart after the confederates, to politely refuse requests of assistance, to busy themselves with some store merchandise so as not to gain a great deal of attention, and to turn toward and inconspicuously watch the confederate.

After training was completed, confederate/observer pairs visited stores in seven large malls located in a Texas metropolis. We selected stores that employed more than 15 people because companies with fewer than 15 employees are not held to the same governmental nondiscrimination standards (Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990; see also Gardin & Richwald, 1986). We selected only retail stores and balanced the type of merchandise sold (e.g., apparel, souvenirs) and typical clientele (e.g., upscale) across conditions. For each interaction, confederates held purses that hid a small tape recorder, which was used to audiotape the interactions. Although they were (of necessity) aware of conditions, both confederates and observers were blind to the specific hypotheses being tested.

We were very careful to ensure that this study was conducted in an ethical manner. In addition to having our study approved by the university's independent review board, we had in-depth discussions about the ethics of the study with other discrimination researchers, the university lawyer, and the student research assistants. We followed all federal and state laws regarding applying for jobs, wearing pregnancy prostheses in retail stores, and audiotaping conversations. In addition, we designed the methodology so that participants did not encounter anything that they might not normally have encountered in a day at work (e.g., people applying for jobs, people shopping for items and requesting help). Throughout and following data collection, all of the companies and all of the audiotaped interactions were given experimental numbers so that none of the stores and store employers could be identified individually. Finally, we regularly reminded the confederates and observers to remain sensitive to ethical concerns while conducting the study.

*Pregnancy manipulation.* The pregnancy manipulation was a between-subjects variable. Thus, for half of each confederate's trials, the confederate wore a pregnancy prosthesis that was professionally constructed to simulate a 6 to 7-month pregnancy, a business casual maternity outfit, and a wedding band. For the control trials, each female confederate wore a similar business casual outfit and wedding band but no pregnancy prosthesis. Manipulation checks supported the recognition of confederates wearing the pregnancy prostheses as being pregnant. That is, 55 independent raters were asked to look at a photograph taken of one of the pregnant confederates and to "Describe the woman in the photo." On a separate page, participants estimated how many months pregnant the woman in the photograph was. All of the raters spontaneously identified the woman as being pregnant and thought she was an average of 6.5 months pregnant. Confederates took care to ensure that their appearance was identical in all other respects across pregnant and nonpregnant trials. Although not ideal for randomization, participants began each day of data collection with the pregnancy conditions because of the difficulty of changing into and out of the pregnancy prostheses, which required confederates to put them on before arriving at the mall.

*Role manipulation.* Prior to entering stores, confederates were assigned to either the nontraditional (applicant) or traditional (customer) role. Observers entered the assigned store first and began to examine merchandise so that they did not appear to be acquainted with the confederate. If approached by a store employee, the observer declined assistance. Approximately 1-2 min later, the applicant turned on her audiotape and entered the store.

For the nontraditional role, confederates acted as job applicants. On entering the stores (all of which were known to be hiring, on the basis of prior phone calls), confederate applicants asked to speak with the person in charge. In 39 of the 43 interactions, confederate applicants were told or clearly saw nametags indicating that the employees they spoke with were store managers. Confederate applicants asked four standard questions (rehearsed in simulated interactions) that immediately established the women as job applicants: (a) "Do you have any job openings?" (b) "Could I fill out an application?" (c) "What sorts of things would I be doing if I worked here?" and (d) "Do you think you will hire me?"

For the traditional role, confederates acted as store customers. Upon entering, customer confederates walked to the middle of the stores and waited to be approached by employees. If they were not greeted after 2 min, they directly approached the nearest employee. Customer confederates also asked the store employees standard questions (rehearsed in simulated interactions), including, "Can you help me find something for my sister's birthday?" When employees made a recommendation, customers asked for another backup recommendation, saying, "Can you help me find something else?" in an attempt to measure formal discrimination (which would be indicated by a relative lack of service). After a second recommendation was made, customer confederates replied that both were good suggestions and that they would probably be back to purchase one of them. They then left the stores.

In both role conditions, once confederates left the stores, they went to stations in the malls to fill out surveys about their interactions. Observers waited approximately 2 min before leaving the stores to see if the employees discussed the confederates immediately after their departures. Observers noted any comments on the questionnaires, otherwise identical to the confederates' questionnaires, which they also completed following each interaction.

Once all of the data were collected, we also extensively trained the independent coders, who met with the study coordinator over the course of several days prior to beginning the actual coding sessions. Coders learned that they would listen to a series of audiotaped conversations that took place in stores. They were shown the survey instrument and given appropriate definitions and examples of each of the constructs that they would code. Using a small number of sample tapes available from a previous study, coders practiced responding, and these responses were reviewed as a group to ensure that they viewed constructs similarly. Once this practice session ended and the coders viewed things similarly and/or understood differences in their ratings, they were considered "trained" and began to rate the actual audiotaped stimuli.

## Measures

*Measures of formal discrimination.* The roles of job applicant and customer necessitated different indicators of formal discrimination. In the nontraditional role conditions, we assessed (a) job availability response, (b) permission to complete a job application, (c) likelihood of hiring response, and (d) job callback. Confederates provided genuine phone numbers for potential callbacks. During a 2-month period following their application, confederates took callbacks, noted the stores and job offers, and responded by stating that they were no longer looking for jobs. In the traditional role conditions, we assessed whether employees (a) greeted the customers, (b) recommended a first item, and (c) recommended a

second item. In each case, these were objective behaviors for which negative responses (e.g., saying that no job was available) or lack of the behavior (e.g., failure to serve the customer) would indicate formal discrimination. The confederates recorded the responses to all formal discrimination measures.

*Measures of interpersonal discrimination.* The interpersonal discrimination measure was comprised of items that assessed behaviors reflective of interpersonal hostility and benevolence. In contrast to formal discrimination, interpersonal discrimination was assessed (a) independently by confederates, observers, and independent raters of the audiotapes (who were not involved in the data collection process and were unaware of both the hypotheses and confederate conditions); (b) by means of the same measures across both role conditions; and (c) in a manner that differentiated between hostile and benevolent (patronizing) responses. Hostile and benevolent behavioral items were generated from previous research on interpersonal behavior (Hall, 1990; Hebl et al., 2002; Kleck & Strenta, 1980; Patterson, 1977; 1982) and categories suggested by ambivalent sexism theory (Glick & Fiske, 1996). We anticipated that a factor analysis of these items would distinguish between hostile and benevolent behaviors, although we believed it was possible that the two scales might be negatively correlated. All items were assessed with a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*Not at All*) to 7 (*Very Much*).

For perceived hostility, confederates and observers independently rated seven perceived hostility items concerning the employees' behavior: (a) hostility, (b) anxiousness, (c) rudeness, (d) staring, (e) furrowed brows, (f) pursed lips, and (g) attempts to end the interaction prematurely. Because of the limited information available from audiotapes, independent raters assessed only three items: hostility, rudeness, and attempts to end the interaction prematurely.

For perceived benevolence, confederates and observers indicated their responses to eight items, rating the extent to which the store employees (a) were overfriendly, (b) were helpful, (c) touched the confederates, (d) maintained eye contact, (e) offered diminutive references (e.g., "honey," "sweetie"), (f) stood too close, (g) smiled, and (h) nodded. Because of the limited information available from audiotapes, the independent raters assessed only two of the benevolence items: overfriendliness and helpfulness. These items were intended to assess patronizing (not merely polite) behaviors.

## Results

### Reliability of Dependent Measures

When analyzed separately, the ratings of interpersonal discrimination by confederates and observers revealed similar results. In addition, there was a high level of agreement (see James, Demaree, & Wolf, 1984) between confederates and observers on both hostile ( $r_{wg(j)} = .91$ ) and benevolent ( $r_{wg(j)} = .94$ ) behavior measures. Thus, for all analyses presented below, we averaged across confederates' and observers' ratings. Independent coders' ratings had to be analyzed separately because (a) coders rated only a subset of items (those that could be audibly coded) and (b) only 96 of the original 110 tapes could be coded. There was high interrater agreement between the two independent coders on both hostile ( $r_{wg(j)} = .88$ ) and benevolent ( $r_{wg(j)} = .83$ ) behavior measures, and

between the independent coders and the averaged confederate/observer ratings (hostile  $r_{wg(j)} = .85$ ; benevolent  $r_{wg(j)} = .73$ ).

To examine whether the perceived hostility and perceived benevolence items tapped distinct constructs, we performed a principal components factor analysis with a varimax rotation, restricting the analysis to two factors ( $N = 105$ ). Factor 1 (eigenvalue = 5.45; variance accounted for = 36.36%) included six benevolent behaviors: smiling (.89), eye contact (.83), nods (.82), helpfulness (.74), overfriendliness (.69), and touching (.29). Two additional perceived benevolence items (i.e., "offered diminutive references" and "stood too close") did not load on either factor and were therefore eliminated. The six items that loaded on Factor 1 formed the perceived benevolence scale ( $\alpha = .85$ ). Factor 2 (eigenvalue = 2.27, variance accounted for = 15.11%) included all seven perceived hostility items: furrowed brow (.86), pursed lips (.86), hostility (.78), staring (.73), rudeness (.56), ending interaction prematurely (.53), and anxiety (.39). These items formed a reliable perceived hostility scale ( $\alpha = .84$ ). There was a significant negative correlation between the perceived benevolence and the hostility scales ( $r = -.46, p < .05$ ). Independent coders' ratings also revealed reliable perceived benevolence ( $\alpha = .79$ ) and perceived hostility ( $\alpha = .76$ ) results, despite including only two and three items, respectively. There was also a significant negative correlation between these two scales ( $r = -.53, p < .05$ ).

The measures of formal discrimination were dichotomous and sometimes represented a series of contingent steps (e.g., suggesting a second item to the customer confederate was contingent on having suggested a first item). Therefore, reliability coefficients could not be computed.

### Formal Discrimination

To assess the extent to which formal discrimination was displayed to pregnant and nonpregnant women, we conducted chi-square analyses on each of the formal discrimination variables. We examined the effect of the pregnancy manipulation separately within each role condition. That is, because formal discrimination toward confederates in different roles necessitated the use of different measures, we do not report a 2 (condition: pregnant, nonpregnant)  $\times$  2 (role: nontraditional, traditional) analysis.

For the nontraditional role, we conducted analyses on the job availability, likelihood of hiring, and job callback items. We had initially intended to include permission to complete a job application as an additional dependent variable; however, there was no variance on this measure (100% of those who asked, whether pregnant or not, were allowed to complete a job application). Consistent with our expectation that expressions of formal discrimination would be limited, when applicants questioned whether there were "any jobs available," employers in the nonpregnant condition responded "yes" 17 out of 21 times (81.0%) as compared with 17 out of 22 times (86.4%) in the pregnant condition,  $\chi^2(1) = .09, p = .77, \eta^2 = .05$ . Employers called nonpregnant applicants back with job offers 10 out of 21 times (47.6%) and pregnant applicants back 9 out of 22 times (40.9%),  $\chi^2(1) = .20, p = .66, \eta^2 = .07$ . Finally, nonpregnant women were told they were likely to be hired 11 out of 21 times (52.4%), while pregnant women were told this 9 out of 22 times (40.9%),  $\chi^2(1) = .57, p = .45, \eta^2 = .12$ .

For the traditional role, we examined the effect of pregnancy on greeting the customer, recommending a first item, and recommending a second item. As expected, separate chi-square analyses on each of the three individual variables did not reveal any significant differences as a function of pregnancy status. Specifically, salespersons greeted pregnant customers 28 out of 34 times (82.4%), while they greeted nonpregnant customers 21 out of 33 times (63.6%),  $\chi^2(1) = 2.99, p = .08, \eta^2 = .21$ . Salespersons recommended a first item 32 out of 34 times (94.1%) to pregnant customers and 32 out of 33 times (97.0%) to nonpregnant customers,  $\chi^2(1) = .32, p = .57, \eta^2 = .07$ . Similarly, salespersons recommended a second item 31 out of 34 times (91.2%) to pregnant customers and 29 out of 33 times (87.9%) to nonpregnant customers,  $\chi^2(1) = .20, p = .66, \eta^2 = .05$ .

### Interpersonal Discrimination

*Confederate and observer ratings.* We had predicted that the amount of interpersonal discrimination encountered by women would vary as a function of their pregnancy status, the traditionality of their role, and the type of behaviors (hostile or benevolent) being measured. A 2 (role: nontraditional, traditional)  $\times$  2 (condition: pregnant, nonpregnant)  $\times$  2 (measure: hostility, benevolence) multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) on interpersonal discrimination ratings (averaged across confederates and observers) revealed the predicted Condition  $\times$  Role  $\times$  Measure interaction,  $F(1, 106) = 9.67, p < .01, \eta^2 = .08$ . See Table 1 for complete MANOVA results.<sup>1</sup> As shown in Figure 1, women elicited differing amounts of hostile and benevolent behaviors depending on the role they enacted and their pregnancy status. When women enacted a nontraditional role, there was significantly more hostility perceived toward pregnant applicants ( $M = 2.55$ ) than toward nonpregnant applicants ( $M = 1.68$ ),  $t(41) = -4.19, p < .001$ . Also as predicted, when the women enacted a traditional role, there was significantly more perceived benevolence shown toward pregnant customers ( $M = 3.51$ ) than toward nonpregnant customers ( $M = 2.84$ ),  $t(65) = -4.20, p < .001$ . Within-condition comparisons also confirmed the expectation that pregnant confederates encountered greater hostility in nontraditional roles ( $M = 2.54$ ) than in traditional roles ( $M = 1.85$ ),  $t(56) = -3.68, p < .01$ . However, contrary to predictions, benevolence experienced in traditional roles ( $M = 3.58$ ) was not greater than that encountered in nontraditional roles ( $M = 3.51$ ),  $t(56) = -0.31, p > .10$ .

*Independent coders' ratings.* To examine the independent coders' ratings, we conducted a 2 (role: traditional, nontraditional)  $\times$  2 (condition: pregnant, nonpregnant)  $\times$  2 (measure:

hostility, benevolence) MANOVA. See Table 2 for complete MANOVA results.<sup>2</sup> The predicted three-way interaction did not reach statistical significance,  $F(1, 92) = 2.54, p = .11, \eta^2 = .03$ , although the means (see Figure 2) were in the predicted directions and were consistent with those shown in Figure 1. Although the three-way interaction failed to reach significance (perhaps because of lower power, since not all audiotapes could be coded and the audiotapes did not provide as rich a set of cues as live observations did), we examined the predicted contrasts. Consistent with predictions, independent coders rated pregnant job applicants as receiving higher levels of hostility ( $M = 2.85$ ) than nonpregnant job applicants received ( $M = 2.04$ ),  $t(34) = -2.05, p = .04$ . Independent coders' ratings of the benevolence encountered by pregnant customers ( $M = 4.07$ ) was not significantly different from that received by nonpregnant customers ( $M = 3.43$ ),  $t(58) = -1.93, p = .06$ . The MANOVA also revealed a significant Role  $\times$  Measure effect,  $F(1, 92) = 6.99, p = .01, \eta^2 = .07$ . Follow-up analyses revealed that independent coders judged pregnant women in traditional roles to receive significantly more benevolence ( $M = 4.07$ ) than did those in nontraditional roles ( $M = 3.00$ ),  $t(55) = 2.76, p < .01$ . Judgments of hostile behaviors also differed significantly, such that pregnant women encountered greater hostility in nontraditional roles ( $M = 3.02, SD = 1.27$ ) than in traditional roles ( $M = 2.17, SD = .93$ ),  $t(55) = -2.81, p < .01$ .

### Discussion

The results of this study show that pregnant women were subjected to polarized reactions (greater hostility or benevolence) on indicators of interpersonal behaviors. Further, whether this ambivalence was resolved in a hostile or benevolent direction depended on the roles pregnant women enacted. Specifically, compared with nonpregnant women, pregnant women received more patronizing, benevolent treatment when in a traditional role (store customer) but garnered more hostility when they pursued a nontraditional role (job applicant). These effects were consistent across ratings from confederates and observers. Independent coders also confirmed that pregnant applicants encountered greater hostility than did nonpregnant job seekers. The predicted three-way interaction failed to reach significance for the coders, perhaps because they (a) were limited only to hearing and not also seeing the conversation, (b) rated interpersonal discrimination on a

Table 1  
Multivariate Analysis of Variance of Confederate and Observer Ratings for Interpersonal Behaviors

Effect	$F(7, 106)$	$p$	$\eta^2$
Role (R): nontraditional, traditional	15.88	.000	.13
Condition (C): pregnant, nonpregnant	27.99	.000	.21
Measure (M): hostility, benevolence	107.01	.000	.50
R $\times$ C	2.17	.14	.02
R $\times$ M	0.48	.49	.01
C $\times$ M	0.00	.96	.00
R $\times$ C $\times$ M	9.67	.01	.08

<sup>1</sup> The MANOVA also revealed three significant main effects for condition,  $F(1, 106) = 27.99, p < .001, \eta^2 = .21$ ; role,  $F(1, 106) = 15.88, p < .001, \eta^2 = .13$ ; and measure,  $F(1, 106) = 107.01, p < .001, \eta^2 = .50$ . Analyses of the means revealed that pregnant women received higher levels of interpersonal treatment averaged across benevolence and hostility ( $M = 2.83$ ) than did nonpregnant women ( $M = 2.49$ ), job applicants received higher levels of interpersonal treatment ( $M = 2.83$ ) than did customers ( $M = 2.55$ ), and more benevolence ( $M = 3.32$ ) than hostility ( $M = 2.00$ ) was perceived overall.

<sup>2</sup> We also found a significant main effect for condition,  $F(1, 92) = 14.26, p < .001, \eta^2 = .13$ , and measure,  $F(1, 92) = 21.97, p < .001, \eta^2 = .19$ . Consistent with the ratings by confederates and observers, the analysis of the means revealed that pregnant women received higher levels of interpersonal treatment averaged across benevolence and hostility ( $M = 3.07$ ) than did nonpregnant women ( $M = 2.64$ ), and more benevolence ( $M = 3.48$ ) than hostility ( $M = 2.26$ ) was perceived overall.

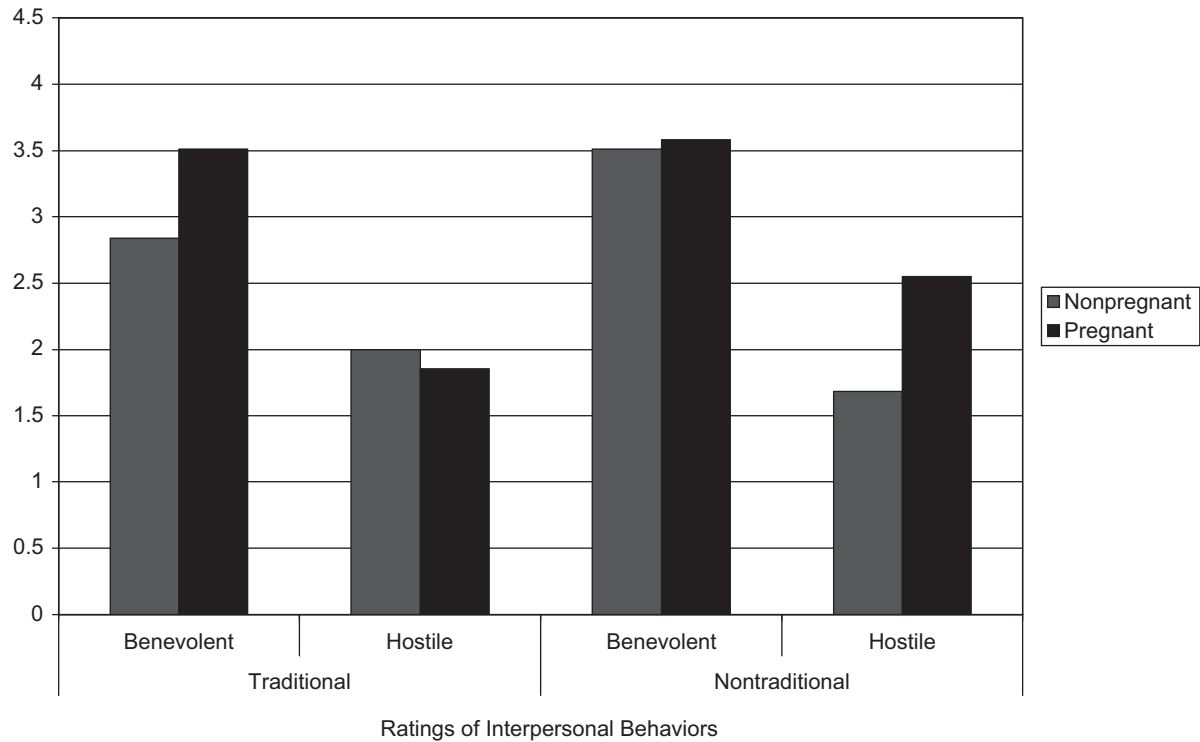


Figure 1. Combined confederate and observer ratings of hostile and benevolent interpersonal discrimination.

smaller set of indicators, and (c) rated fewer interactions because of the inaudibility of some recordings.

We did not find differences in (or evidence of) formal discrimination. This may reflect stronger prohibitions against this kind of discriminatory treatment (in comparison with interpersonal discrimination). Additionally, formal discrimination may be under more conscious control than interpersonal discrimination, which involves subtle, nonverbal behaviors that people may not consciously monitor (Dovidio, Gaertner, Kawakami, & Hodson, 2002; Dovidio, Kawakami, & Gaertner, 2002; Dovidio, Kawakami, Johnson, Johnson, & Howard, 1997; Ekman, Friesen, & O’Sullivan, 1988; Hebl et al., 2002). Although the eradication of formal discrimination is a good start toward providing members of protected groups with equal opportunities, its absence does not mean that discrimination and bias as a whole has been extinguished. Rather, members of protected groups may not be protected from more subtle forms of discrimination, and as Valian

(2000) suggests, it is these “molehills” that over time can create “mountains” of disparate treatment.

Although hostile behavior was generally rarer in all conditions in comparison with benevolent behavior, this is not surprising given general norms of politeness and the context in which the study took place: retail stores. Situational demands (such as company nondiscrimination policies toward applicants and training about how to “treat customers right”) are likely to have constrained store employees’ behavior. Even a small amount of hostility may nevertheless have a significant effect, since counternormative behaviors are viewed as more diagnostic of another person’s true attitudes (e.g., Jones & Harris, 1967). As a result, targets of discrimination may be especially attentive to (and strongly affected by) subtle signs of hostility. For instance, Dovidio, Kawakami, and Gaertner (2002) found that African American participants (as well as independent observers) inferred White interaction partners’ “true” attitudes from their hostile and avoidant nonverbal behaviors rather than by the (politically correct) content of what they said. In other words, an absence of formal discrimination (in terms of content of communication) did not mitigate the effects of interpersonal discrimination (hostile nonverbal behavior and tone) on targets of discrimination. Targets instead become mistrustful and suspicious of the other person, a situation known to elicit the negative effects (e.g., diminished performance) of stereotype threat (Steele, 1997). In short, small interpersonal behaviors can have large consequences (see also King et al., 2006).

In addition to the anticipated and resulting pattern of means, unexpected behaviors were also illuminated by the data. In particular, the expression of benevolence toward job applicants (both

Table 2  
Multivariate Analysis of Variance of Independent Coder Ratings for Interpersonal Behaviors

Effect	F (7, 92)	p	η <sup>2</sup>
Role (R): nontraditional, traditional	3.48	.07	.10
Condition (C): pregnant, nonpregnant	9.73	.002	.04
Measure (M): hostility, benevolence	24.11	.000	.21
R × C	0.08	.78	.00
R × M	6.99	.01	.07
C × M	0.29	.59	.00
R × C × M	2.54	.11	.03

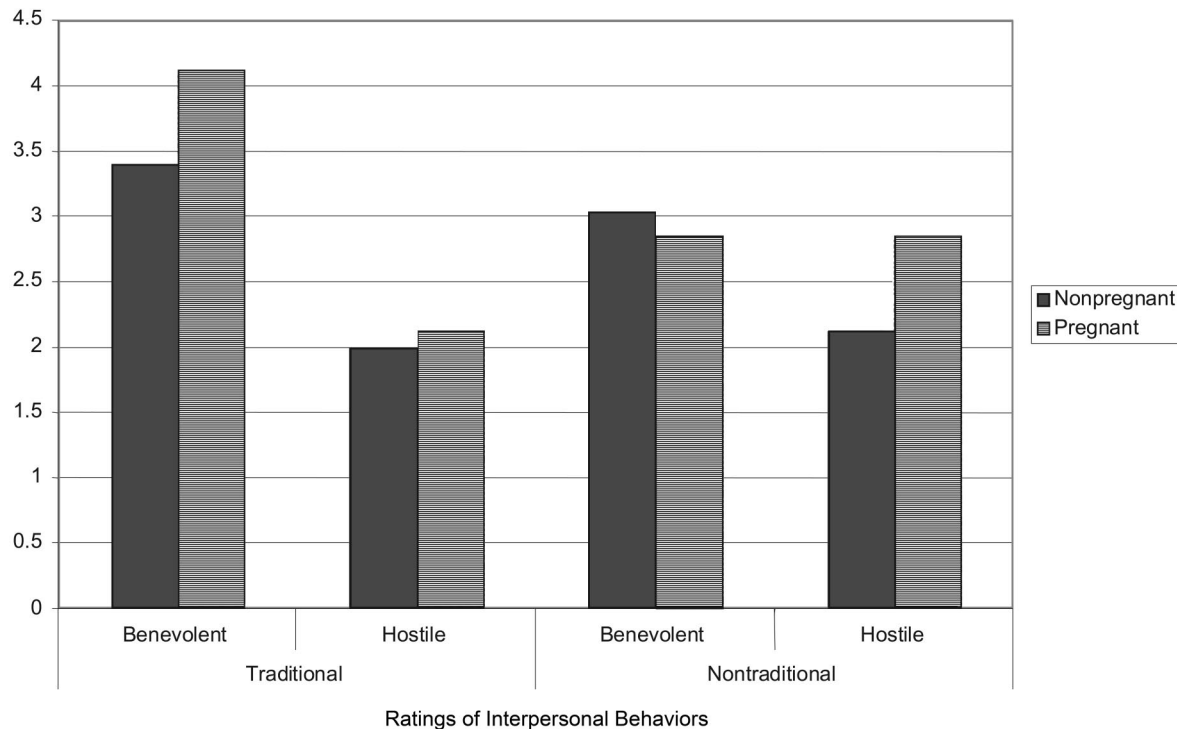


Figure 2. Independent coders' ratings of hostile and benevolent interpersonal discrimination.

pregnant and nonpregnant) was equivalent to the benevolence encountered by pregnant shoppers. Perhaps sales managers respond to applicants as benevolently as they do to pregnant shoppers because the need for sales support motivates them to try to impress or recruit potential employees. Similarly, it is possible that the hostility directed toward pregnant job applicants is based in self-interested motives such as the fear of having to take on more work for an employee on maternity leave. However, the assumed self-interest motive may be based on the same stereotypes that fuel ambivalently sexist attitudes (i.e., assumptions about pregnant women's abilities). The extent to which reactions toward pregnant women are consistent with ambivalent sexism theory, rather than motivated by self-interest independent from sexist attitudes, deserves more attention.

A methodological limitation of the first study was that both applicants and observers were necessarily aware of the experimental condition. We attempted, however, to safeguard against potential biasing effects of this knowledge in several ways. First, we trained applicants across a number of sessions and used standardized scripts that the applicants were required to memorize. Second, confederates and observers were not told what kinds of differences were expected across conditions. Third, condition-blind independent coders detected differences in employee behavior from listening to audiotaped versions of the interactions. It may be, however, that the differences were inspired by the applicants themselves, and future researchers might consider further ways to control for this possibility.

A particular strength of the first study is that it used subtle, unobtrusive behavioral measures and observed naturalistic interactions. To our knowledge, this is the first study to document

sexist ambivalence with behavioral, rather than attitudinal, measures in a field setting. Past studies showing that hostile and benevolent sexism are directed toward different stereotypical subtypes of women (career women and homemakers, respectively) examined attitudes, not actual behavior (Glick et al., 1997).

The naturalism of the study, however, meant that we were unable to collect detailed information from the viewpoint of the store employees that might reveal the moderators and mediators of interpersonal discrimination. In particular, we were unable to control the gender composition of the participant pool (store employees); hence, the vast majority of participants (84.5%) were women. In addition, we were limited to studying behaviors toward applicants for sales positions rather than for a wide array of jobs. We address these limitations in a second, experimental study that examined men's and women's evaluations of pregnant and nonpregnant applicants to positions that are either traditionally feminine or traditionally masculine. This methodology controls for the possibility of self-interest (allowing a clearer extension of ambivalent sexism theory) by asking participants to consider pregnant or nonpregnant applicants for a variety of jobs in which the participant had no motivated interest.

## Study 2

The generalizability of the results of the first study is constrained by the focus on retail jobs rather than a wide range of jobs in which pregnant applicants may experience discrimination. Compared with other types of work situations, retail stores tend to hire largely female staffs, have large numbers of part-time and temporary employees, have less time and money invested in training and



benefits for employees, and have less competition for jobs. This type of work is both stereotypically feminine and of low status; it is precisely the sort of job in which women are not typically discriminated against and are sometimes favored in hiring decisions (Glick et al., 1995). Although the first study suggests that pregnant women are perceived as being less suitable even for jobs that are traditionally feminine (in this case, retail jobs in a mall setting), it is also possible that gender-typing of occupations and industries may moderate the severity of discrimination against pregnant women. For instance, factors such as the gender type of the product or service (e.g., children's clothing vs. landscaping) may shape responses to pregnant applicants.

Both ambivalent sexism and role-congruency theory suggest that discrimination against pregnant job applicants would be strongest in stereotypically masculine or traditionally male-dominated jobs (cf. Halpert & Burg, 1997; Swiss & Walker, 1993). In Bragger et al.'s (2002) study, in which undergraduates viewed interview videos of either pregnant or nonpregnant applicants, pregnant applicants for a feminine position tended to be recommended for hiring to a greater extent than were pregnant applicants for a more masculine position. Thus, it is striking that hostile interpersonal discrimination toward pregnant applicants occurred for the female-dominated, low-status jobs that were typically being applied for in the first study. Although self-interest may account for these initial findings, this second study allows a more direct extension of the predictions of ambivalent sexism theory by considering pregnant and nonpregnant applicants for a variety of jobs. Given the lack of self-interested motivations in the current study, it is possible that pregnant (as compared with nonpregnant) applicants might receive more favorable evaluations for highly feminine jobs. Alternatively, such a pregnancy boost may not occur, given that people may dislike pregnant women working outside the home (even if in a highly gender-congruent job).

In addition to job type, a second question regarding the generalizability of the findings of Study 1 is whether male and female evaluators are equally likely to exhibit hostility toward pregnant (as opposed to nonpregnant) female job applicants. Although ambivalent sexism theory emphasizes that sexist ideologies probably originated in men's attitudes toward women, it is well established that these ideologies have become cultural beliefs that affect women's attitudes as well (Glick et al., 2000, 2004). Measures of ambivalently sexist attitudes show similar factor structures and predictive validity for men and women (Glick et al., 2000, 2004). The differences between women and men tend simply to be a matter of degree—women generally express hostile sexism to a lesser degree than do men, but they tend to endorse benevolent sexism (e.g., the belief that men ought to protect and provide for women) as much as (or more than) do men. In cross-national comparisons involving 19 countries in one study (Glick et al., 2000) and 16 countries in another (Glick et al., 2004), women's average scores on measures of hostile and benevolent sexism consistently correlated in the .80–.90 range with men's average scores on these measures. In other words, cross-cultural comparisons show considerable consensus between men and women in endorsement of these ideologies. An exploratory analysis examining the responses of the 17 male and 93 female personnel in Study 1 showed that male store employees in the nontraditional condition exhibited more hostility than did the female store employees (replicating men's greater hostile sexism), but no other significant

findings emerged with regard to gender of store employee.<sup>3</sup> Thus, though male evaluators might generally be more hostile toward pregnant female applicants, we expected that the influence of participant gender on relationships between an applicant's pregnant status and the job's traditionality on evaluators' hostility would be negligible.

Extending the results of Study 1, we anticipated that, just as pregnant job applicants encountered greater interpersonal hostility than did pregnant customers, pregnant as compared with nonpregnant female applicants would elicit greater hostility for stereotypically masculine or male-dominated jobs that are incongruent with the feminine gender role. In contrast, pregnant (relative to nonpregnant) applicants were expected to be treated similarly or perhaps even more favorably when applying for feminine (and therefore more role-congruent) jobs.

## Method

### Design

This experiment used a 2 (condition: pregnant, nonpregnant)  $\times$  2 (gender type of position: feminine, masculine)  $\times$  2 (participant's gender: male, female) between-subjects design to examine gender type of the job and gender of participant as potential moderators of discrimination.

### Participants and Procedure

Four undergraduate research assistants (two men, two women) approached approximately 160 individuals in public locations (e.g., outdoor shopping centers, airports) in a large metropolitan area and requested completion of a brief survey, generating an agreement rate of approximately 66%. All individuals included in the current research were required to be above 18 years of age and to be currently employed. These inclusion criteria yielded a sample of 105 working adults (56 men, 49 women). The average age of the participants was approximately 30 years ( $SD = 14.04$ ), and over half of the participants (52%) had completed at least some college education. The majority of participants (61%) were Caucasian, with an additional 21.9% Hispanic, 7.6% African American, 4.8% Asian, and 4.7% Other.

<sup>3</sup> More specifically, we conducted a 2 (condition: pregnant, nonpregnant)  $\times$  2 (role: traditional, nontraditional)  $\times$  2 (gender of store personnel: male, female) MANOVA on the interpersonal behaviors displayed in the interactions with 17 male and 93 female store personnel. Consistent with ambivalent sexism theory and Glick et al.'s (2000, 2004) findings, we found a significant three-way interaction,  $F(1, 100) = 5.98, p < .02, \eta^2 = .06$ . The pattern of the data revealed that there were no gender differences in benevolent behaviors and no differences in hostile behavior in the traditional condition. However, in the nontraditional condition, male store personnel were perceived to exhibit marginally more hostility ( $M = 3.17, SD = 1.22$ ) toward pregnant women than were female store personnel ( $M = 2.45, SD = 0.56$ ),  $t(20) = 1.76, p = .09$ . Chi-squared tests on each of the formal discrimination items revealed no significant gender (or Gender  $\times$  Pregnancy Status) differences with one exception. Female (but not male) employees greeted nonpregnant women (12 of 28 nonpregnant trials) more than pregnant women (5 of 29 pregnant trials),  $\chi^2 = 4.47, p < .05$ .

Consenting participants were asked to imagine that they were an employment placement agent and to read a brief description of a female applicant's interview. Specifically, participants read, "We are interested in understanding job placement processes. Please imagine that you work for an employment placement agency and read the following applicant profile. You will be asked to recall this profile and provide your evaluations concerning job suitability and job placement." In an interview summary provided to the participant, the applicant was described as a woman "... seeking full-time employment in a position suiting her abilities. Applicant did not express interest in any one particular type of job but did express enthusiasm to apply her diligent work ethic anywhere. During the interview process, the applicant was punctual, courteous, and articulate. If hired, applicant stated that she could start immediately. Applicant came across as very responsible and friendly during the interview."

Half of the participants were randomly assigned to the pregnant condition, and their reading also included, "When asked how she spends her spare time, the applicant replied that she enjoys spending time with her husband preparing a new nursery in their home." The rest of the participants were randomly assigned to the nonpregnant condition, and their reading included, "When asked how she spends her spare time, the applicant replied that she and her husband enjoy painting their new house."

Given this information, participants proceeded to consider the applicant for six jobs. Half of the participants were randomly assigned to the "feminine" condition, and they provided evaluations of the applicant for the positions of family lawyer, maid, kindergarten teacher, pediatrician, women and gender studies professor, and furniture sales representative. The rest of the participants were randomly assigned to the "masculine" condition, and they provided their evaluations of the applicant to the parallel positions of corporate lawyer, janitor, high school math teacher, general surgeon, structural engineering professor, and farm machinery sales representative. Participants indicated whether they agreed with items designed to reflect hostility toward the applicant and responded to demographic queries. Finally, participants recalled whether the applicant they evaluated was pregnant or nonpregnant and whether the jobs they considered were "masculine" or "feminine" in nature. A total of 81 participants (42 men, 39 women) responded to both manipulation checks correctly and constituted the final sample included in all analyses.

### Measure of Interpersonal Hostility

Drawing from the theory and measurement of ambivalent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996), we created seven items for the purposes of this research to capture participants' interpersonal hostility toward the fictitious applicants. Participants indicated the degree of their agreement with these items by means of a 7-point Likert scale anchored by 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) and 7 (*Strongly Agree*). Specifically, participants responded to items that described the target as (a) "a lazy worker," (b) "would complain a lot," (c) "would try to get out of doing work," (d) "would expect to have their work done for them," and (e) "would be too moody to be an effective worker," and that the participant (f) "would be angry if I had to work with this applicant," and (g) "wouldn't give this person a position of power." These items were internally consistent ( $\alpha = .86$ ), loaded on a single factor (eigenvalue = 3.81, variance

accounted for = 54.43%), and averaged to form an overall interpersonal hostility composite.

### Results

A 2 (condition: pregnant, nonpregnant)  $\times$  2 (gender type of position: masculine, feminine)  $\times$  2 (participant's gender: male, female) between-subjects ANOVA with interpersonal hostility as the dependent variable (see Table 3) tested our predictions. No main effects or interactions (including participant's gender effects) approached significance, with the exception of the significant interaction between pregnant status and gender type of position,  $F(1, 73) = 7.44, p < .01$ . Specifically, confirming our hypotheses and the results of the first study, when evaluating applicants for masculine positions, participants indicated greater interpersonal hostility toward pregnant applicants ( $M = 3.14$ ) as compared with nonpregnant applicants ( $M = 2.41$ ),  $t(38) = -2.31, p < .05$ . Reactions to applicants for feminine positions were in the opposite direction but not significantly different; pregnant applicants ( $M = 2.39$ ) tended to elicit less interpersonal hostility than did nonpregnant applicants ( $M = 2.90$ ),  $t(39) = 1.78, p = .08$  (see Table 4).

### Discussion

Supporting and extending the findings of Study 1, the results of Study 2 suggest that pregnant women applying for jobs encounter more hostile reactions when they are considered for jobs that are traditionally masculine than do their nonpregnant counterparts. Moreover, these effects did not differ as a function of participant gender, suggesting that both men and women are susceptible to bias toward pregnant applicants. Though the differences were not significant, the means also suggest that pregnant applicants for feminine jobs may encounter less hostility than do nonpregnant applicants. It may be that feminine jobs, such as being a kindergarten teacher or maid, are consistent with the feminine gender role and are therefore considered appropriate for pregnant women. Overall, the results of Study 2 demonstrate that, consonant with ambivalent sexism theory (Glick & Fiske, 1996, 2001) and role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002), pregnant women were penalized by both men and women when considered for positions that were incongruent with a traditional feminine role.

Despite the fact that this study relied on a paper-and-pencil design, it offered an opportunity to consider the generalizability of Study 1 (which focused on actual interactions and had high external validity) and systematically to test the moderating role of

Table 3  
Multivariate Analysis of Variance for Interpersonal Hostility Ratings

Effect	<i>F</i> (7, 73)	<i>p</i>	$\eta^2$
Gender type of position (P):			
feminine, masculine	0.04	.71	.00
Condition (C): pregnant, nonpregnant	0.43	.79	.01
Participant's gender (G)	2.12	.15	.03
P $\times$ C	7.44	.01	.09
P $\times$ G	0.96	.33	.01
C $\times$ G	2.46	.12	.03
P $\times$ C $\times$ G	2.46	.12	.03

Table 4  
*Means (SDs) and Sample Sizes for Interpersonal Hostility  
 Toward Applicants for Masculine and Feminine Jobs*

Participant gender	Masculine jobs		Feminine jobs	
	Pregnant applicants	Nonpregnant applicants	Pregnant applicants	Nonpregnant applicants
Male	3.35 (0.90)	2.63 (1.06)	2.86 (0.70)	2.63 (0.91)
Female	2.83 (1.41)	2.12 (0.53)	2.09 (0.94)	3.19 (0.85)
Total	3.14 (1.11)	2.41 (0.89)	2.39 (0.92)	2.90 (0.91)
<i>n</i>	15	25	18	23

gender type of job. We caution that although pregnant (as compared with nonpregnant) women appeared not to elicit hostile reactions for stereotypically feminine jobs in Study 2, this may be misleading, given Study 1's demonstration of interpersonal hostility toward pregnant applicants for (largely) feminine jobs. Paper-and-pencil responses may be more controlled and therefore mask a general distaste for pregnant job applicants that spontaneous behaviors reveal. Further, being confronted with an apparently late-stages pregnant woman is likely to be a more salient and powerful femininity-cue than is a manipulation in which an imagined applicant obliquely indicates her pregnant status. Finally, the participants in Study 1 would have contemplated actually working with the applicant, bringing in motivations (e.g., self-interest) that were intentionally methodologically controlled in Study 2.

Study 2 also allowed a test of whether the gender of the perceiver moderates hostility toward pregnant applicants. Although the sample size was modest for this purpose, the small effect size that emerged suggests that even a sample 10 times larger may not have detected a significant effect of gender. It seems reasonable to conclude—on the basis of this small effect size, as well as largely redundant confidence intervals for men and women, despite the well-known difficulties with confirming a null hypothesis—that the gender of the perceiver likely has little effect on reactions to pregnant applicants.

### General Discussion

Both a field experiment and a survey study supported the theoretical rationale derived from ambivalent sexism and role congruity theories (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Glick & Fiske, 1996) that pregnant women evoke hostile reactions in situations in which they stray from the traditional feminine gender role. As a result, pregnant women may face significant obstacles to successful employment. In Study 1's field setting, ostensibly pregnant (compared with nonpregnant) women encountered greater behavioral hostility when applying for retail jobs but greater benevolence when posing as shoppers. In Study 2, pregnant applicants faced more hostile reactions than did nonpregnant women when considered for traditionally masculine, but not feminine, jobs.

Together these findings are consistent with what would be anticipated by both ambivalent sexism theory (Glick & Fiske, 1996, 2001) and role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Both of these theories suggest that pregnant women who seek full-time employment are likely to be perceived as violating traditional gender roles and therefore will encounter negative reactions. Further, pregnant women (and new mothers; Cuddy, Fiske,

& Glick, 2004) are assimilated into a traditional female stereotype that diminishes their perceived competence (Wolkind & Zajicek, 1981), making them a poor match for most jobs (a role incongruity effect). Conversely, the benevolent treatment of pregnant women who embrace their traditional role is consistent with ambivalent sexism theory and with research showing that women who are perceived as possessing stereotypically feminine qualities are perceived to be "wonderful," but only because of their perceived warmth (Eagly & Mladinic, 1994; Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002).

In contrast to hostile discrimination against pregnant job applicants, the benevolent or patronizing treatment of pregnant customers may appear to be trivial. Research on the effects of benevolently sexist attitudes and behaviors, however, suggests otherwise. The constellation of benevolent behaviors assessed here (smiling, nodding, being overly friendly, being overly helpful, maintaining eye contact, and touching) may subtly reinforce lower status for pregnant women. Although smiling and nodding can be signs of deference (Deutsch, 1990), overly friendly behaviors are also directed toward low-status others (Hall, 1984; Henley, 1977), because powerful individuals are freer in their expressions of affection toward low-status others (e.g., Tiedens & Fragale, 2003). We believe that the benevolent behaviors exhibited by store employees were of the patronizing sort that can reinforce group-based status differences. For instance, Altermatt (2001) found that women who were shown receiving chivalrous help (e.g., having doors opened and items fetched for them) were perceived as less independent than were women who did these things for themselves. Thus patronizing behavior toward pregnant women may reinforce stereotypes of their helplessness. Vescio et al. (2005) showed that patronizing feedback (e.g., excessively favorable praise in place of tangible rewards) diminishes women's task performance. This combination of rewards and punishment pushes toward the same discriminatory outcome: reinforcing traditional female roles. Overall, the findings across two studies support the application of ambivalent sexism theory to pregnancy discrimination.

In addition to these theoretical contributions, meaningful practical implications can be derived from this research. The benevolent and hostile manifestations of sexism that are exemplified in the current research may be precisely the behaviors that contribute to the relegation of pregnant women to gender-congruent roles, where caretaking of children is either their sole or primary responsibility (Eagly, 1987). Such treatment is likely to contribute to the persistence of gender inequity in contemporary American society. It is critical that organizational decision makers and human resource practitioners become aware of contemporary manifestations of ambivalent sexism to ensure that they comply with the federal legislation protecting pregnant women, equalize the representation of men and women in organizations, and create a climate that empowers rather than subjugates or subtly undermines women. Strategies that support these goals might include awareness training for recruiters, interviewers, and performance evaluators; support groups or mentoring programs for expectant parents; and formal organizational policies that enable new mothers and new fathers to balance their parenting and work responsibilities more easily.

Without such efforts, pregnant women who stay within the traditional bounds expected of mothers-to-be are likely to experi-

ence a patronizing solicitousness that implicitly demeans their competence. In contrast, should they pursue nontraditional roles, they risk being treated with hostility. Both forms of gender role reinforcement are more likely to be evident in interpersonal than in formal indices of discrimination, which may have insidious effects for working pregnant women who, though increasingly well protected against formal job discrimination, may suffer the effects of more subtle patterns of behavior that circumvent legal prohibitions and are therefore not actionable. Whether hostile or benevolent, such interpersonal discrimination may act to sustain social inequality by reinforcing traditional gender stereotypes and roles. The accumulated effects of these subtle differences in treatment may, over time, produce large discrepancies in meaningful work outcomes.

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