Discrimination is especially apt to surface when people are able to justify their prejudice (D. L. Frey & Gaertner, 1986; Gaertner & Dovidio, 1977). M. L. Snyder, Kleck, Strenta, and Mentzer (1979) asked participants to watch a comedy videotape in one of two rooms. For some participants, the same videotape was playing in both rooms; for other participants, a different videotape was playing in each room. In addition, another person was already seated in each room. The person in one room was physically handicapped, and the person in the other room was not physically handicapped. Snyder and colleagues reasoned that although many people feel uncomfortable being near physically disabled people, they do not wish to discriminate against them. Consequently, they will not avoid contact with the disabled unless they are given a way of justifying their avoidance. In this experiment, the participants in the different-tapes-are-playing-in-each-room condition are given just such an opportunity. By being interested in whichever videotape the physically handicapped person is not watching, participants can avoid the physically disabled person without appearing to be prejudiced. The prediction, then, is that participants will avoid the handicapped person in the different-tapes condition but not in the same-tapes condition. The data revealed just such a pattern. Whereas 58 percent of the participants sat with the disabled person when the same videotape was playing in each room, only 17 percent did so when a different videotape was playing. Along with other research, these findings indicate that people exhibit discrimination when it can be disguised, rationalized, or excused (e.g., Beal, O’Neal, Ong, & Ruscher, 2000; Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000; Hodson, Dovidio, & Gaertner, 2002; Monin & Miller, 2001).

Prejudice and discrimination also surface when people have been threatened or attacked by an outgroup member. To illustrate, Sinclair and Kunda (2000) had male participants apply for a simulated job. The participants then received either positive or negative feedback from a supervisor who was either male or female. Finally, participants evaluated the supervisor’s competence. Figure 10.4 shows that male participants who received a positive evaluation did not display sexism, but that male participants who received a negative evaluation did. These findings suggest that sexism is normally suppressed unless individuals are provoked or otherwise frustrated and thwarted (see also Sinclair & Kunda, 1999).

**FIGURE 10.4**
Sexism Following Threat

Male participants who were evaluated positively showed no sexism, but those who were evaluated negatively rated the female supervisor less favorably than the male supervisor.

*Source: Sinclair and Kunda (2000).*