

PERCEPTIONS AND CONSEQUENCES OF CONFRONTING SEXISM: A MULTI-
METHOD EXAMINATION OF CONTEXT AND CONFRONTIER IDENTITIES

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR
OF PHILOSOPHY

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN PSYCHOLOGY

YORK UNIVERSITY

TORONTO, ONTARIO

JULY 2023

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Abstract

Despite the numerous benefits of confronting prejudice, people rarely stand up to expressions of intergroup bias. Across three papers and nine studies, using a multi-method approach spanning scenario studies, reverse correlation paradigms, and an immersive interpersonal interaction, the present research investigated consequences and support for confrontation across confronter identities and contexts and their associated outcomes. In three experiments, Paper 1 examined expectations for confrontation related to a sexist incident, evaluations of the actors across confronting responses, and support for confrontation. These questions were investigated across various confronter identities (female target versus male witness) and context (social versus professional). In four experiments, Paper 2 used a reverse correlation paradigm to explore attributes (i.e., likeability, morality, masculinity, power, and age) associated with mental images of confronters versus nonconfronters of sexism. These perceptions were examined across varying confronter identities (female target, male witness, self). In two experiments, Paper 3 implemented an online chat interaction to investigate how confronting or passive responses affected perceptions of competence and likeability, support for confrontation, and leadership outcomes. Together, the results provide novel evidence for not only the disadvantages but also the advantages associated with confronting sexism across confronter identity and contexts. Benefits of confronting, particularly in domains related to power, competence, and leadership are highlighted.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Kerry Kawakami, for her mentorship, guidance, and support throughout my graduate career. Your passion and dedication for conducting rigorous research that seeks to achieve important goals for social justice has been inspiring and motivating. Thank you for the effort and care you put into everything you do.

I would also like to communicate my appreciation for my committee members, Dr. Amy Muise and Dr. Joey Cheng. Your support, encouragement, and valuable insights were instrumental throughout this process and have contributed greatly to the quality of the work. Thank you also to my examining committee, Dr. Jennifer Steele, Dr. Brent Lyons, and Dr. Sonia Kang for your time as well as your insightful comments and questions, which have been inspiring in thinking about future directions of this research.

I owe a debt of gratitude to the research assistants, fellow graduate students, and postdocs of the Social Cognition Lab who have provided support and contributed greatly to the development of this research. This includes my collaborators Dr. Meghan George and Raquel Andary—thank you for your important contributions to this research. A special thanks to Dr. Francine Karmali and Dr. Chanel Meyers who have been both mentors and friends and whose guidance and support have helped shaped my work as well as who I am as a researcher.

I would like to communicate my extreme gratitude to my endlessly supportive family. Thank you to my parents: your support and love have propelled me throughout my life and have given me the confidence and determination to take on any challenges while also remembering to appreciate and enjoy the journey along the way. I would also like to thank my grandmother Cristina whose unrivalled combination of intellectualism and passion have always been a source of inspiration for me. Thank you to my big sister Oriana who has always been a role model of

mine. You have always been there cheering me on and I feel so grateful to have you and Cam in my corner. A special thanks to my son Remy who was born just in time for my defense and provided me with an extra push of motivation and inspiration in the final stages of my dissertation!

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Sam. You are my rock and have supported, loved, and sustained me infinitely throughout this process and beyond.

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DISSERTATION INTRODUCTION

Bias against women remains prevalent in society today in casual, everyday contexts, as well as in workplace environments (Graf, 2018; Parker & Funk, 2020; Plaut, et al., 2015). Research using daily diary methods found that young women reported experiencing between one and two sexist incidents a week (Swim et al., 2001). For women experiencing sexism, such incidents can have an array of consequences. For example, these interactions can trigger identity threat, undermine their performance in stereotypically male domains, negatively impact how competently they perform in a job interview setting, impede career advancement and occupational well-being, lead to poorer health outcomes, and have lasting affective and physiological implications (Gervais et al., 2011; Good & Rudman, 2010; Koch et al., 2014, 2015; Logel et al., 2009; Manuel et al., 2017; Schneider et al., 2001; Sojo et al., 2016).

The Importance of Standing Up to Sexism

Given the prevalence and wide-reaching consequences of sexist behaviour, it is critical to find ways to reduce the occurrence and negative impact of gender bias. One way to accomplish this goal might be to confront instances of prejudice (Mallett & Monteith, 2019). Confronting prejudice has the ability to promote a more inclusive climate, produce positive subsequent interactions, reduce the likelihood of future prejudice and discrimination, and enhance workplace belongingness (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2008; Czopp et al., 2006; Mallett & Wagner, 2011; Rattan & Dweck, 2018). In contrast, a lack of confrontation in the face of prejudice can provoke negative reactions from ingroup members, elicit increased tolerance for sexual harassment and decreased support for survivors, and inadvertently signal to the perpetrator and witnesses that sexism is acceptable (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2008; Czopp, 2019; Kahn et al., 2015; Mallett et al., 2019; Vaccarino & Kawakami, 2021). Though confronting sexism can also provide benefits to

the confronter such as an increased sense of competence, self-esteem, and empowerment for women who confront, women who fail to confront sexism are perceived by others to be harming the reputation of other women, and they themselves can experience negative emotions such as guilt (Becker & Barreto, 2014; Gervais et al., 2010; Shelton et al., 2006).

Despite the multitude of benefits associated with standing up to bias, people do not tend to confront instances of prejudice (Brinkman et al., 2011; Dickter & Newton, 2013; Karmali et al., 2017; Kawakami et al., 2019; Mallett & Monteith, 2019). Sexism in particular is often trivialized and seen as less worthy of confrontation than other forms of bias (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Gulker et al., 2013). For example, in a study by Swim and Hyers (1999) only 16% of women who were targets of sexism directly confronted the perpetrator. One challenge to confrontation are the social costs associated with speaking up in the face of bias (Kaiser & Miller, 2001; Kawakami et al., 2019; Shelton & Stewart, 2004). Confronters, particularly when they are the female target (i.e., the recipient of the sexist act), can be perceived as overreacting, overly sensitive, a complainer, or rude (Becker et al., 2011; Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Eliezer & Major, 2012; Gervais & Hillard, 2014).

Impact of Confronter Identity

Notably, the identity of the confronter plays a role in the costs associated with confronting. Indeed, confrontation from witnesses compared to target group members is seen as more valid and less driven by self-interest, is more effective and taken more seriously, and is less likely to incur the negative repercussions experienced by women who confront sexism (Ball & Branscombe, 2019; Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Drury & Kaiser, 2014; Hekman, et al., 2017; Rasinski & Czopp, 2010; Rodin et al., 1990).

Although nontargets (i.e., witnesses) are able to avoid social consequences associated with confronting, confrontation from both targets and nontargets have unique advantages and are important to examine. Moreover, members of targeted groups are more likely to detect sexism in the first place and are more likely to confront prejudice than nontargets (Dickter et al., 2012; Drury & Kaiser, 2014; Gulker et al., 2013). The current dissertation examined perceptions of confronters across identities, examining traits associated with confronting sexism as a female target or a male witness.

As an additional confronter identity, we examined self-perceptions of female target confronters. In general, people are motivated to perceive themselves positively, however, we also derive our self-concept and self-esteem from the groups to which we belong (i.e., our gender) (Alicke & Govorun, 2005; Festinger, 1954; Spears, 2011; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Zell et al., 2020). We thus explored how a woman's self-perceptions might be impacted by whether or not she confronts the perpetrator of a sexist comment.

The Power of Confronters

While past literature often emphasizes the backlash associated with confronting sexism, the present dissertation had the additional goal of emphasizing advantages associated with confrontation, particularly in the domain of attributions of power, competence, and leadership. Women who confront sexism benefit from an increased sense of competence and empowerment and can elicit more respect than their passive counterparts (Dodd et al., 2001; Gervais et al., 2010). Additionally, leadership and gender are related to one another with leadership roles disproportionately occupied by men and leadership behaviour and traits more closely associated with men than women (Begeny et al., 2021; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly et al., 2020; Koenig et al., 2011; Scott & Brown, 2006). Notably, traits relating to power and leadership are also

associated with confrontation behaviours (Ashburn-Nardo & Karim, 2019). The words of powerful people tend to be particularly salient and powerful people are expected to, and are more likely to, confront prejudice (Alt et al., 2022; Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2020; Barreto et al., 2010; Taylor & Fiske, 1978).

The power of confronting is also demonstrated in terms of confrontation norms. Exposure to sexism itself can uphold norms that promote the acceptance and tolerance of prejudice (Ford & Ferguson, 2004; Ford et al., 2001). In terms of confrontation, people look to others to determine whether to confront (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2008). Since confrontation in response to bias is rare, descriptive norms, which guide our behaviour based on how most people would act in a given situation, might encourage us to remain passive in situations of discrimination (Brinkman et al., 2011; Cialdini et al., 1990; Kaiser & Miller, 2001; Kawakami et al., 2019; Mallett & Monteith, 2019). Movements like #MeToo, however, suggest that descriptive norms can be harnessed by highlighting the frequency of a behaviour (Zacharek et al., 2017). To this end, the present dissertation also examined the power held by those who confront sexism in terms of setting the norms of the situation and encouraging further confrontation.

The Impact of Context

Notably, norms tend to vary across the contexts in which they occur (Cialdini et al., 1990; Pronin et al., 2008). In the case of sexism, more professional environments may have policies and expectations for reporting prejudice which may encourage active responses to bias such as sexism (Glick, 2014; Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2019; U.S. EEOC, 2019). On the other hand, in more every day or social contexts, norms related to confronting are less common and explicit (Bates, 2015; Graf, 2018). As such, though sexist behaviour may be classified as prejudiced across environments, norms regarding how to respond to sexist acts across

professional and social contexts may be less clear in the latter case. This dissertation thus had the additional goal of examining perceptions and outcomes associated with confronting sexism across professional or competence-related contexts, as well as more social contexts.

The Importance of a Multi-Method Approach

Research related to confrontation often highlights the discrepancies between expectations and actual behaviour. Hypothetical expectations relating to confronting prejudice are often misaligned with actual responses (Crosby & Wilson, 2015; Karmali et al., 2017; Kawakami et al., 2009, 2019; Shelton & Stewart, 2004; Swim & Hyers, 1999). For instance, women tend to believe they would confront the perpetrator of a sexist comment, but these expectations do not typically come to fruition (Brinkman et al., 2011; Kawakami et al., 2019; Mallett & Monteith, 2019). Given this disconnect between hypothetical expectations and actual behaviour, a critical goal of this dissertation was to develop a more accurate and nuanced understanding of perceptions and outcomes of confronting sexism by using various methods. In particular, the present dissertation examined these topics using hypothetical scenario studies (Paper 1), reverse correlation paradigms (Paper 2), and an interactive immersive situation (Paper 3), with each method presenting its distinct advantages. The hypothetical scenarios with explicit evaluations in Paper 1 allowed for a rich examination of perceptions of confronters across identities and contexts. The reverse correlation paradigm implemented in Paper 2 allowed us to visualize and quantify people's mental representations of group members, operationalizing perceptions of confronters in a novel and informative way (Dotsch & Todorov, 2012; Dotsch et al., 2008). This method has the added advantage of circumventing social rules and norms related to reporting stereotypes about confronting sexism, uncovering biases related to confronters in a more subtle, implicit way. Finally in Paper 3, by examining confrontation within an interpersonal interaction

with other participants, we could evade issues relating to mispredictions and affective forecasting and investigate downstream consequences of confrontation in terms of real-world outcomes (Crosby & Wilson, 2015; Karmali et al., 2017; Kawakami et al., 2009).

Dissertation Research Overview

Across three papers using multiple methods, the present dissertation examined perceptions of those who confront (or do not confront) an instance of sexism. These perceptions are examined across confronter identities (whether a female target, a male witness, or oneself) as well as across contexts (whether in a more social or professional setting). A further goal of the present dissertation was to examine implications of confronting, particularly as they relate to power and leadership (establishing norms and encouraging future confrontation, as well as electing a group leader).

In the three papers that follow, I present a series of nine experiments that outline both positive and negative consequences of confronting sexism as a female target, male witness, or the self in terms of trait perceptions, power to encourage support for confrontation, and leadership attributions. Paper 1, entitled “In the Office or at the Gym: The Impact of Confronting Sexism in Specific Contexts on Support for Confrontation and Perceptions of Others,” was published in *Self and Identity* in 2021. In this article, across three experiments, we examined expectations for confrontation from female targets and male witnesses of sexism, evaluations of the perpetrator, female target, and male witness when confrontation takes place, and how confronting behaviour subsequently impacts norms and support for confrontation. Notably, these effects were examined across a professional and social context. Paper 2, entitled “What Does Someone Who Stands Up to Intergroup Bias Look Like? Mental Representations of Women, Men, and the Self Who Confront Sexism,” is currently in preparation for submission. Across

four experiments, this manuscript utilized a reverse correlation paradigm to investigate attributes associated with mental images of confronters versus nonconfronters of sexism. Critically, this paper examined perceptions of female targets of sexism, male witnesses of sexism, and the self in terms of likeability, morality, masculinity, power, and age. Finally, Paper 3, entitled “Speaking Out Against Sexism: Confronters as Leaders,” is currently in preparation for submission. Across two experiments, using an online chat interaction paradigm, this paper investigated how confronting or passive responses to sexism affected perceptions of competence and likeability, support for confrontation, and leadership attributions.

Following the presentation of these three papers, a final discussion outlining the contribution of my dissertation is provided. The benefits and drawbacks of confronting intergroup bias are also discussed, along with its implications for leadership, allyship, and future avenues of research.

**In the Office or at the Gym: The Impact of Confronting Sexism in Specific Contexts on
Support for Confrontation and Perceptions of Others**

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Vaccarino, E., & Kawakami, K. (2021). In the office or at the gym: The impact of confronting sexism in specific contexts on support for confrontation and perceptions of others. *Self and Identity*, 20(7), 893-912. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15298868.2020.1832566>¹

¹ This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in *Self and Identity* on October 18th, 2020, available online: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/10.1080/15298868.2020.1832566>

Abstract

Although being the target of sexism is common for women, confrontation is relatively rare. In three studies, we investigated support for confronting a sexist comment and how such responses in either a work or social setting by a target or witness can influence perceptions of the target, witness, and perpetrator. Results from Experiment 1 confirmed that, in general, the perpetrator of a sexist comment is evaluated negatively and that most people support confrontation, especially by a female target. Results from Experiment 2 indicated that while a female target was evaluated less positively when confronting than passive, these social costs were less evident in a professional versus social context. These target actions also impacted perceptions of the perpetrator: he was evaluated less positively when the target was confronting than passive, especially in the office. Notably, more participants supported confrontation by the target after reading that she was confrontational than passive. In contrast, results from Experiment 3 demonstrated that a male witness was evaluated more, *not less*, positively when confronting than passive, and this effect was not moderated by context. Although the witness' actions did not impact perceptions of the perpetrator, more participants supported confrontation by the witness after reading that he was confrontational than passive. Together these findings contribute to a growing literature on understanding environments that can foster confrontation and reduce confronter backlash.

In the Office or at the Gym: The Impact of Confronting Sexism in Specific Contexts on Support for Confrontation and Perceptions of Others

Being the target of prejudice and discrimination is common for racial and ethnic minorities, and women in society today (Graf, 2018; Plaut et al., 2015). For example, research using daily diary methods found that college women reported experiencing one to two sexist incidents per week (Swim et al., 2001). Though bias is commonplace, confronting acts of prejudice is relatively rare (Dickter & Newton, 2013; Kawakami et al., 2019). For example, only 16% of women who were targets of sexism directly confronted the perpetrator (Swim & Hyers, 1999). Research indicates that non-targets or witnesses of prejudice also seldom confront bias. For example, when witnesses were placed in a situation where a perpetrator made a racist comment, no one confronted him (Kawakami et al., 2009).

Nonetheless, confronting intergroup bias is important because it has a number of positive downstream consequences. For example, confrontation has the power to promote a more inclusive climate (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2008), to produce positive subsequent interactions, and to reduce the likelihood of future stereotyping and prejudice (Czopp et al., 2006; Mallett & Wagner, 2011). Confronting can also provide benefits to the confronter, such as increased confidence, self-esteem, and a sense of empowerment (Gervais et al., 2010).

Given the positive effects of confrontation, it is important to examine both support for and obstacles associated with confronting perpetrators of bias. In the present research, we therefore investigated beliefs about whether people should confront sexism, one common social cost (negative evaluations of the confronter by others), as well as one benefit of confrontation (signaling that the perpetrator was out of line). Furthermore, we explored the potential impact of the context of the confrontation, whether professional or social, on both support for confrontation

and evaluations. We then report three experiments that specifically investigated the role of confrontation by a female target of sexism or a male witness, and context on perceptions of the target, witness, and perpetrator, as well as support for confrontation. Finally, we discuss the implications of our findings for increasing confrontation and reducing sexism.

Support for Confrontation

An initial goal of the present research was to investigate whether people believe that we should confront sexism. On the one hand, we live in a society with strong norms against prejudice and discrimination. Because of these standards, people are motivated to espouse views that indicate that they are egalitarian and fair to all (Apfelbaum et al., 2008; Crandall et al., 2002). This may be especially the case since the fall of 2017, when support for people who confront perpetrators of sexual abuse or harassment has received widespread attention with the #MeToo movement (Zacharek et al., 2017). On the other hand, compared to racism, sexism is viewed as more acceptable (Czopp et al., 2006; Rasinski & Czopp, 2010) and not severe enough to warrant being taken seriously (Blodorn et al., 2012). For example, Czopp and Monteith (2003) found that when confronted with their own sexist compared to racist behavior, participants reacted with much less discomfort and remorse.

While previous research has often looked at support for a specific form of confrontation by a specific person (Kahn et al., 2015) or at impressions of the confronting target (Garcia et al., 2010; Kaiser et al., 2009), in the present study we investigated support for confrontation, *per se*. Specifically, we examined whether people believe that it is important to confront or remain passive in response to a sexist comment. In addition, we explored whether this support is moderated by the identity of the confronter. Although a female target may be more likely to recognize sexism (Rodin et al., 1990; Swim et al., 2001), it is unclear whether people assume

that a female target and/or a male witness should confront. When men advocate on behalf of women and take on the role of ally, they can be effective partners in combatting sexism (Dickter et al., 2012; Drury & Kaiser, 2014). It is therefore important to understand support for confrontation by a female target of sexism and a male witness both before and after confrontation.

Barriers and Benefits of Confrontation

There are both barriers and benefits to confrontation. A major barrier is the social cost to the confronter (Kaiser & Miller, 2001); when such costs are high, people are less likely to act (Shelton & Stewart, 2004). One common form these costs can take is negative evaluations of the confronter by others, especially if the person confronting is the female target. In particular, female targets who confront are often perceived as oversensitive troublemakers and complainers who overreact and are rude (Becker et al., 2011; Eliezer & Major, 2012). Because men ostensibly have no self-interest in signaling that an action is sexist, their responses are perceived to be more objective and legitimate (Drury & Kaiser, 2014). Male witnesses who confront, therefore, are typically not met with the same level of negativity (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Rasinski & Czopp, 2010).

In contrast to remaining passive (Blanchard, et al., 1994), one additional benefit of confrontation is that it can signal that a behavior is offensive, impact evaluations of the perpetrator (Czopp & Monteith, 2003), and foster support for confrontation (Mallett & Wagner, 2011; Rasinski et al., 2013). A further goal of the present research was to investigate how confrontation affects perceptions of perpetrators of sexism and beliefs about whether people should confront sexism. While research indicating that men are perceived to be more objective when confronting suggests that they may be more effective in defining sexism and therefore how

the perpetrator is evaluated (Drury & Kaiser, 2014), other research indicates that female targets may be more impactful (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2008; Mallett & Wagner, 2011). Furthermore, legal definitions of harassment often denote that the female target is in the best position to define whether behaviors are objectionable. For example, such definitions typically include such terms as “unwelcome” and “conduct that is likely to cause offense to the target” (Ontario Human Rights Commission [OHRC], 2019; U.S. EEOC, 2019). In the present research, we investigate whether confrontation by a female target and/or a male witness results in less positive evaluations of the male perpetrator and support for confrontation in general.

Effects of Context

Several factors have been shown to impact evaluations of targets who confront (Kawakami et al., 2019). For example, Kaiser et al. (2009) found that group identification can moderate these evaluations. Specifically, their results demonstrated that women who weakly identified with women expressed more negative attitudes towards targets who confronted sexism. Furthermore, research suggests that the perceived pervasiveness of sexism can impact perceptions of confronters. In particular, when sexism is seen as more pervasive, women but not men evaluate a female target more positively when she protested gender discrimination (Garcia et al., 2010; Kahn et al., 2015). A primary goal of the present research was to extend this literature by examining how the situation in which the confrontation takes place can influence perceptions of confronters.

One reason why contexts are important is that they are often associated with specific norms (Cialdini et al., 1990; Pronin et al., 2008). Norms related to confronting sexism may differ across environments. For example, compared to more casual or social contexts, work environments often have policies and expectations for reporting acts of bias which encourage

female targets to respond to the perpetrator to prevent future abuse (Glick, 2014). For example, Human Rights Codes often stipulate that sexual harassment is prohibited in the workplace and recommends that employers enact anti-sexual harassment policies (OHRC, 2019; U.S. EEOC, 2019). Norms related to confronting such behaviour in more social contexts and everyday life, however, are much less explicit or formalized (Bates, 2015; Graf, 2018). Though sexism may be prevalent and often occur with impunity in both contexts (Graf, 2018; Parker & Funk, 2020), explicit norms about how to respond are typically less common in social contexts. In the present experiments, we investigated how a more professional versus social context interacts with confronter identity to impact support for confrontation and evaluations of the female target, the male witness, and the perpetrator of sexism.

Notably, context may impact support for confrontation differently than evaluations of the actors. According to Construal Level Theory (CLT), people may respond differently to hypothetical versus actual events (Trope & Liberman, 2010). Thus, when imagining how people should respond to sexism, they may react to events on a more abstract level. When thinking on this level, people focus less on peripheral cues such as the local context, and their responses instead reflect their core values and promote just actions (Alper, 2020; Eyal et al., 2009). In the present context, when asked if a target or witness should confront, people may therefore invoke their ideological egalitarian values and support confrontation regardless of context.

However, when presented with a concrete instance of confrontation, people may react to this specific event at a lower level of construal (Trope & Liberman, 2010; Wakslak & Trope, 2009). When processing events on this level, people focus more on details and secondary features of the event such as the immediate situation. When events are less hypothetical, priorities related to abstract, principle-based values are weakened and may be unrelated or even

reversed from reactions at a more abstract level. In the present context, when asked to evaluate targets, witnesses, and perpetrators in a specific context, people's actual responses may be driven more by implicit gender biases than higher-level egalitarian values (Kawakami et al., 2019; McConnell et al., 2011).

Overview of Studies

The present research has the potential to contribute to the literature on confronting bias in three ways. First, an initial goal was to investigate support for confrontation, *per se*, by examining beliefs about whether a female target and/or male witness should confront sexism. Second, we explored not only how confrontation influences perceptions of a female target or male witness who confronts, but also the perpetrator. Third, our research extends previous literature on responses to bias by investigating the role of context. Specifically, we explored how confronting in a professional or social context influences both support for confrontation and evaluations of the actors.

To achieve these goals, we conducted three experiments. In each experiment, participants were recruited and given course credit for an online study via an undergraduate participant pool. Participants were presented with a scenario of a sexist comment occurring in either a gym or office. The focus of Experiment 1 was on perceptions of the perpetrator of sexism and on support for confrontation by the target and witness. In this initial experiment, where no one responded to the sexist comment, we examined whether the perpetrator's comment was deemed offensive and whether he was evaluated negatively. Given our focus on confrontation, we wanted to ensure that the comment was indeed perceived to be inappropriate. We also explored support for confrontation and whether it was moderated by context. In accordance with CLT (Trobe & Liberman, 2010), we expected that when people were asked hypothetically whether a female

target or male witness should confront, regardless of whether the event occurred in the gym or office, they would respond according to higher-level egalitarian values and support confrontation.

In Experiment 2, participants were presented with the same scenario which now included a response to the sexist comment by a female target. We predicted that the target would be evaluated more negatively when she confronted than was passive (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Gulker et al., 2013). Furthermore, based on CLT, we expected that when evaluating this actual event, participants would be influenced by the context. Specifically, we expected that the target would be evaluated less negatively in a professional context, where the norms about confrontation are more explicit and formalized, than in a social context. Furthermore, if confrontation by a female target highlights instances of sexism, perpetrators will be evaluated more negatively when the target confronted than was passive in a professional versus social context. We also expected, based on CLT, that when people were asked hypothetically whether others should stand up for confrontation, even after it occurs, participants would respond according to abstract, global values, and support confrontation by a target regardless of context.

In Experiment 3, the focus was on the effect of a male witness' response to sexism. In contrast to a female target, we expected that a male witness would be evaluated more, *not less*, positively when he confronted than was passive (Czopp & Monteith, 2003). Based on CLT, when responding to an actual event, we also expected that the witness would be judged more positively in a professional than social context. Furthermore, if confrontation by a male witness helps define instances of sexism, perpetrators would be evaluated more negatively when the witness confronted than was passive in a professional than social context. We also expected,

based on CLT, that when asked hypothetically whether others should stand up for confrontation, regardless of context, participants would support confrontation by a witness.

Experiment 1

Methods

Participants and Design

The primary goal of Experiment 1 was to initially assess perceptions of a sexist comment and the perpetrator in a professional and social context when confrontation information was not provided, as well as support for confrontation. Participants were randomly assigned to context condition in a 2 Context (Gym vs. Office) x 3 Actor (Target vs. Witness vs. Perpetrator) mixed design with actor as a within-subjects variable. The data from 242 (117 women, age range: 17-38 years old, $M_{age} = 19.43$, $SD_{age} = 2.81$; race: 49% Asian; 16% White; 15% Middle Eastern; 5% Black; 15% other/undisclosed) participants were included in the analyses.² A sensitivity analysis using G*Power (Faul et al., 2007) found that our final sample could detect effects of $f = 0.11$ ($\eta^2 = 0.01$) for the predicted actor main effect (power = .80, $\alpha = .05$, M observed correlation among repeated measures, $r = .16$).

Procedure

Participants randomly assigned to the gym context read the following scenario: *Jack, Eileen, and Ralph go to the same gym. When the three of them are at the gym one day, Jack makes a comment to Eileen saying “You seem moody, is it your time of the month or something?”* Alternatively, participants assigned to the office context read: *Jack, Eileen, and Ralph work at the same office. When the three of them are at the office one day, Jack makes a comment to Eileen saying, “You seem moody, is it your time of the month or something?”*

² Information about participant exclusions for each experiment are described in the supplementary material.

After reading the scenario and completing comprehension questions (see supplemental material), to investigate perceptions of the actors and the sexist comment, participants responded to items related to the likeability of each actor and the offensiveness (how socially acceptable and offensive), and typicality of the perpetrator Jack's behavior on 9-point scales. Finally, participants were presented with two questions about whether they thought Eileen (the female target) would (Yes/No) and should say or do anything (Yes/No) followed by the same two questions about Ralph (the male witness),³ before an attention check (see supplemental material).

Results and Discussion

Likeability Ratings

Likeability ratings were subjected to a 2 Context (Gym vs. Office) x 3 Actor (Target vs. Witness vs. Perpetrator) mixed ANOVA with actor as a within-subjects variable. Although participant gender was included in the initial analysis of all experiments, it did not qualify any of the predicted effects and all gender effects are reported in the footnotes.⁴ The main effect of actor was significant, $F(2, 239) = 136.60, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.53$. Simple effects analyses revealed that the perpetrator ($M = 3.34, SD = 1.73$) was less liked than the target ($M = 5.57, SD = 1.36$), $t(241) = -16.38, p < .001, d = 1.43, 95\% \text{ CI } [-2.49, -1.96]$, and the witness ($M = 5.30, SD = 1.43$), $t(241) = 13.64, p < .001, d = 1.24, 95\% \text{ CI } [-2.24, -1.68]$. Furthermore, the witness was liked less than the target, $t(241) = 2.70, p = .007, d = 0.19, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.07, 0.46]$. The 2-way actor x context interaction was not significant, $F(2, 239) = 136.60, p = .603, \eta^2 < 0.01$.

Offensiveness of Perpetrator's Behavior

³ For exploratory purposes, participants in all studies were also asked what they expected the actors to say and why.

⁴ The only effect of gender in Experiment 1 was a main effect on expectations for confrontation by the target. Women (93%) compared to men (84%) expected the target to confront more often, $B(1, N = 242) = 0.95, W = 4.69, p = .030, 95\% \text{ CI } [1.10, 6.15]$.

Perceived offensiveness and social acceptability (reverse-scored) of the perpetrator's behavior were correlated ($r = .25$) and a composite mean score was created ($M = 6.98$, $SD = 1.60$). To investigate the effect of context (gym vs. office) on perceptions of the perpetrator's behavior, an ANOVA was conducted on ratings of offensiveness and typicality, separately. The effects of context on offensiveness ratings, $F(1, 242) = 1.89$, $p = .170$, $\eta^2 < 0.01$, 95% CI [-0.69, 0.12], and typicality ratings, $F(1, 242) = 0.77$, $p = .384$, $\eta^2 < 0.01$, 95% CI [-0.34, 0.87], were not significant. The perpetrator's behavior was considered offensive (office: $M = 7.11$, $SD = 1.61$; gym: $M = 6.83$, $SD = 1.58$) and moderately typical (office: $M = 5.65$, $SD = 2.46$; gym: $M = 5.92$, $SD = 2.28$) in both the office and gym, respectively.

Expectations and Support for Confrontation

To examine the effects of context (gym vs. office) on both expectations and support for confrontation by the target and witness, we conducted binary logistic regressions separately for the female target and the male witness. As expected, context did not significantly impact expectations for confrontation by the target, $B(1, N = 242) = -0.04$, $W = 0.01$, $p = .926$, $Exp(B) = 0.96$, 95% CI [0.44, 2.12], or witness, $B(1, N = 242) = 0.01$, $W < 0.01$, $p = .984$, $Exp(B) = 1.01$, 95% CI [0.58, 1.76], or whether the target, $B(1, N = 242) = 0.34$, $W = 0.90$, $p = .344$, $Exp(B) = 1.40$, 95% CI [0.70, 2.82], or witness, $B(1, N = 242) = -0.12$, $W = 0.21$, $p = .644$, $Exp(B) = 0.88$, 95% CI [0.52, 1.49], should confront. However, chi-square analyses collapsing over context demonstrated that a majority of participants expected that the female target would confront (88%) than remain passive (12%), $X^2(1, N = 242) = 142.96$, $p < .001$, and should confront (84%) than remain passive (16%), $X^2(1, N = 242) = 113.87$, $p < .001$. Notably, while fewer participants expected that a male witness would confront (29%) than remain passive (81%), $X^2(1, N = 242) =$

44.69, $p < .001$, a small majority reported that he should confront (64%) than remain passive (46%) $\chi^2(1, N = 242) = 18.00, p < .001$.

In summary, in Experiment 1, no information was provided about how targets or witnesses responded to sexism, to examine participants' expectations of their reactions. We found that, under these circumstances, the male perpetrator was perceived as less likeable than a female target and a male witness, and the perpetrator's behavior was evaluated as offensive. The results further indicated that a large majority of participants expected that a female target would and should confront the male perpetrator. In contrast, few participants expected a male witness to confront the perpetrator, though more than half thought he should. In line with CLT (Troe & Liberman, 2010), these responses to a hypothetical event (should they confront) were not moderated by context, potentially indicating a more abstract level of processing related to a focus on higher-order values than peripheral cues.

Experiment 2

Methods

Participants and Design

The primary goal of Experiment 2 was to investigate the impact of confrontation by the target and context on actor evaluations as well as support for confrontation. Participants were randomly assigned to context and target response condition in a 2 Context (Gym vs. Office) x 2 Target Response (Confront vs. Passive) x 3 Actor (Target vs. Witness vs. Perpetrator) mixed design with actor as a within-subjects variable. The data from 215 (111 women; age range: 17-43 years old, $M_{age} = 19.32$, $SD_{age} = 2.89$; race: 42% Asian; 28% White; 11% Middle Eastern; 6% Black; 13% other/undisclosed) participants were included in the analyses. A sensitivity analysis using G*Power found that our final sample could detect effects of $f = 0.14$ ($\eta^2 = 0.02$) for the

predicted Context x Target Response x Actor interaction on actor evaluations (power = .80, $\alpha = .05$, M observed correlation among repeated measures, $r = .19$).

Procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to read a scenario set in a gym or office in which the target either confronted the perpetrator of a sexist comment or remained passive. While the descriptions of the situations were the same as in Experiment 1, in the confront conditions: *Eileen responds by saying: "That's not OK, Jack"* and in the passive conditions: *Eileen smiles politely without saying anything*. We selected this passive response to indicate that the target had heard the comment and provided a neutral response. Because our primary focus was on how the same response would impact evaluations of the actors in different contexts and because a nonresponse or any negative reaction could be construed as signaling disapproval and opposition (Dickter & Newton, 2013; Kawakami et al., 2019), we chose to compare a direct confrontation with a nonconfrontational response.

Similar to Experiment 1, after completing comprehension questions, participants evaluated the behavior and likeability of the target, witness, and perpetrator on 9-point scales. Participants also indicated whether they thought the target and witness should have said anything (Yes/No) and finally presented with an attention check.⁵

Results and Discussion

Evaluative Ratings

Evaluations of the behavior and likeability of each actor were correlated ($r = .40$ to $.50$) and a composite mean evaluative score for each actor was created. To examine the effect of context and target response on evaluations, we conducted a 2 Context (Gym vs. Office) x 2

⁵ In Studies 2 and 3, perceptions of the offensiveness and typicality of each actor's behavior were also examined. Due to word limitations, analyses related to these items were included in the supplemental materials.

Target Response (Confront vs. Passive) x 3 Actor (Target vs. Witness vs. Perpetrator) mixed ANOVA with actor as a within-subjects factor.⁶ The main effect of actor was significant, $F(2, 210) = 185.63, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.64$. The perpetrator ($M = 2.61, SD = 1.50$) was evaluated less positively than the target ($M = 5.76, SD = 2.02$), $t(214) = -17.44, p < .001, d = 1.77$, 95% CI [-3.50, -2.79], and the witness ($M = 4.09, SD = 1.56$), $t(214) = -12.69, p < .001, d = 0.97$, 95% CI [-1.71, -1.25]. The witness was also evaluated less positively than the target, $t(214) = 9.84, p < .001, d = 0.93$, 95% CI [1.34, 2.01]. The main effects of context, $F(1, 211) = 6.96, p = .009, \eta^2 = 0.03$, and target response $F(1, 211) = 63.97, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.23$, were also significant. Actors were evaluated less positively in the office ($M = 4.01, SD = 1.06$) than gym ($M = 4.29, SD = 1.05$), and when the target confronted the perpetrator ($M = 3.63, SD = 0.86$) than was passive ($M = 4.63, SD = 0.86$).

The actor x target response interaction was also significant, $F(2, 210) = 12.63, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.11$. However, this effect was qualified by the predicted three-way interaction, $F(2, 210) = 5.40, p = .005, \eta^2 = 0.05$. Simple effects analyses related to target evaluations produced a significant context x target response interaction, $F(1, 215) = 8.97, p = .003, \eta^2 = 0.04$. Although the female target was rated less positively in the office when she was confronting ($M = 5.13, SD = 1.85$) than passive ($M = 6.46, SD = 1.69$), $F(1, 215) = 15.70, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.07$, she was rated especially negatively in the gym when she was confronting ($M = 4.30, SD = 1.71$) than passive ($M = 7.04, SD = 1.62$), $F(1, 215) = 69.29, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.25$, see Figure 1. For witness evaluations, the context by target response interaction was not significant, $F(1, 215) = 0.67, p =$

⁶ In initial analyses, a main effect of gender was found on evaluations of the actors, $F(1, 207) = 12.38, p = .001, \eta^2 = 0.06$, with women ($M = 3.95, SD = 1.02$) evaluating the actors less positively than men ($M = 4.38, SD = 1.06$). A main effect of participant gender was found for support for both target and witness confrontation. In particular, women (80%) indicated that a female target should confront more than men (68%), $B(1, N = 215) = -0.97, W = 7.61, p = .006$, 95% CI [0.19, 0.76]. Similarly, women (78%) indicated that a male witness should confront more than men (46%), $B(1, N = 215) = -1.50, W = 23.37, p < .001$, 95% CI [0.12, 0.41].

.415, $\eta^2 < 0.01$. Participants rated the male witness less positively when the target was confronting ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 1.63$) than passive ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 1.46$), $F(1, 215) = 5.74$, $p = .017$, $\eta^2 = 0.03$, regardless of context, see Figure 2. For perpetrator evaluations, the context x target response two-way interaction was significant, $F(1, 215) = 3.96$, $p = .048$, $\eta^2 = 0.02$. Although in the office, the perpetrator was evaluated less positively when the target was confronting ($M = 1.87$, $SD = 1.14$) than passive ($M = 2.78$, $SD = 1.68$), $F(1, 215) = 10.20$, $p = .002$, $\eta^2 = 0.05$, evaluations of the perpetrator in the gym did not differ when the target was confronting ($M = 2.78$, $SD = 1.40$) or passive ($M = 2.90$, $SD = 1.48$), $F(1, 215) = 0.16$, $p = .676$, $\eta^2 < 0.01$, see Figure 3.

Figure 1

Target evaluations across gym and office contexts and confronting and passive target responses in Experiment 2. Error bars represent the standard error of the mean.

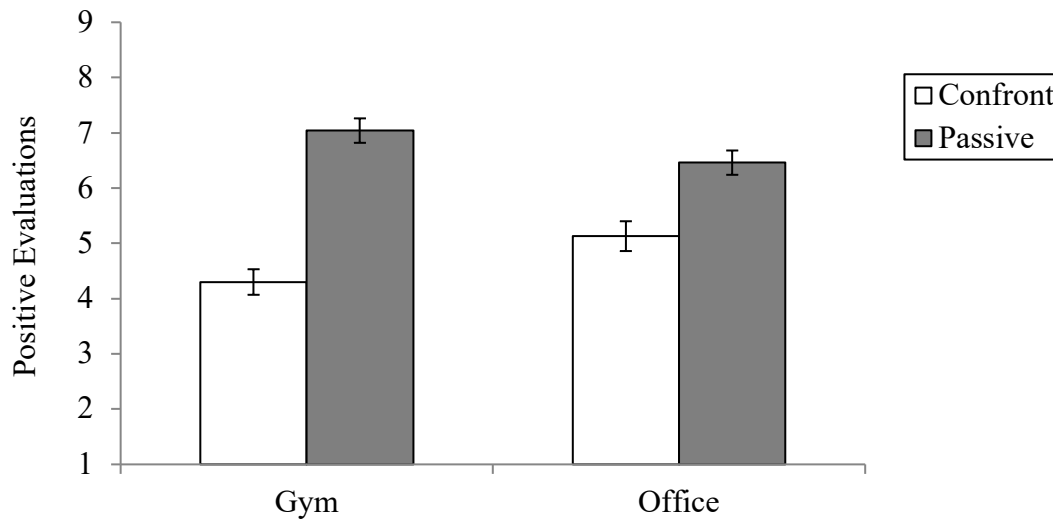
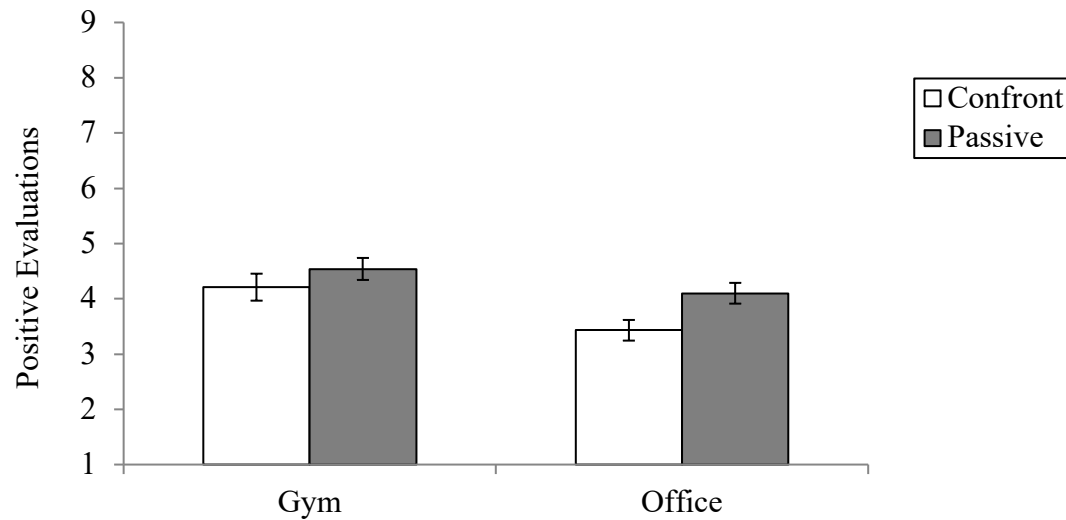
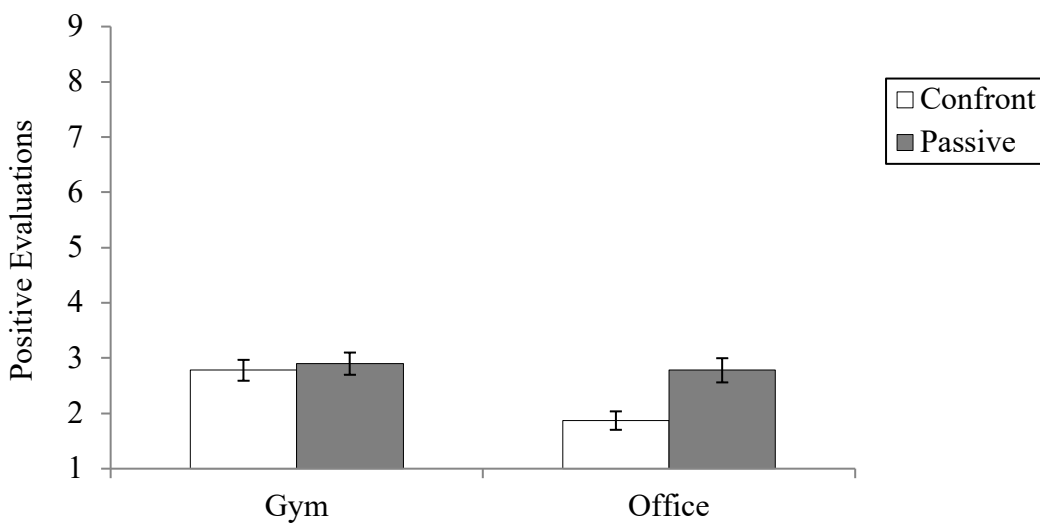


Figure 2

Witness evaluations across gym and office contexts and confronting and passive target responses in Experiment 2. Error bars represent the standard error of the mean.

**Figure 3**

Perpetrator evaluations across gym and office contexts and confronting and passive target responses in Experiment 2. Error bars represent the standard error of the mean.

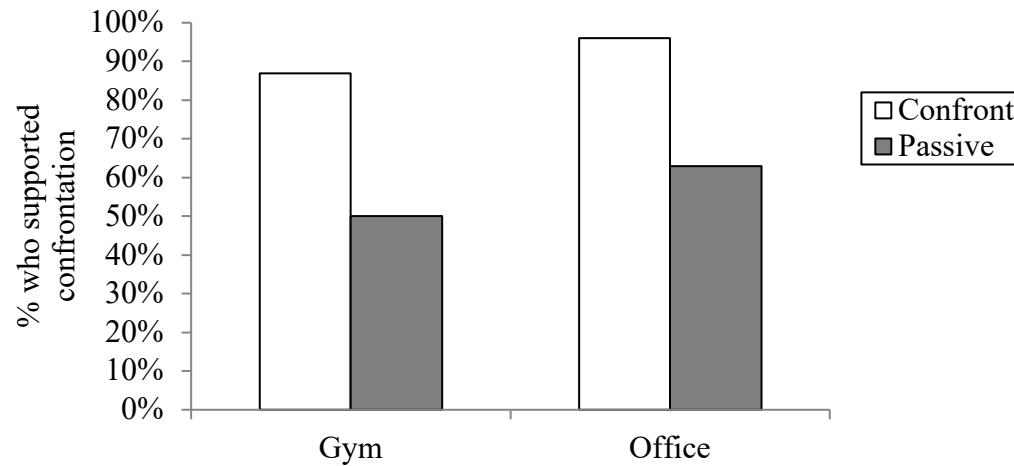


Support for Confrontation

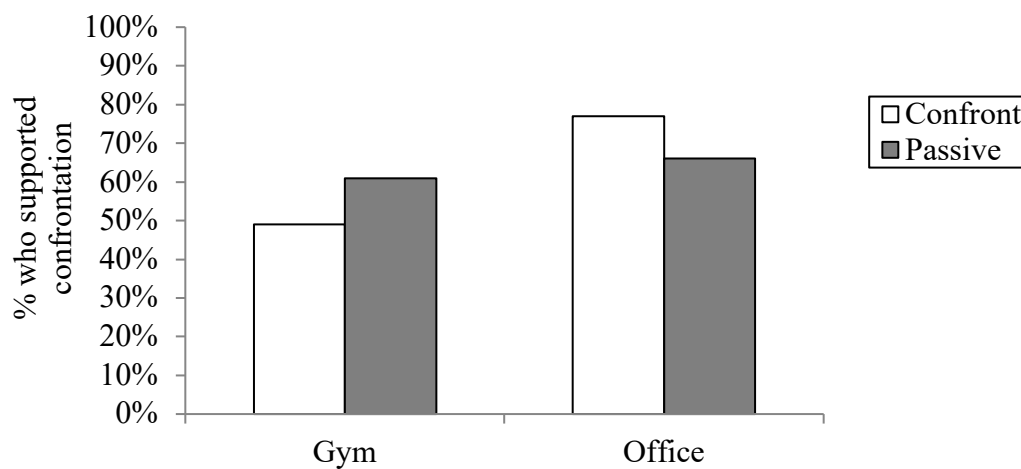
In Experiment 2, to examine whether participants believed that the target or witness should confront a sexist comment (yes vs. no) after reading about a specific response from the target, we conducted two logistic regression analyses related to the effect of context (office = 0, gym = 1) and target response (confront = 0, passive = 1). Analyses related to the female target demonstrated a significant effect of target response, $B(1, N = 215) = 2.14, W = 28.17, p < .001, Exp(B) = 8.53, 95\% CI [3.87, 18.83]$. Confrontation by a female target was supported more when she was confronting (92%) than passive (57%). The target response x context interaction was not significant, $B(1, N = 215) = -0.67, W = 0.54, p = .464, Exp(B) = 0.51, 95\% CI [0.09, 3.07]$, see Figure 4. Analyses related to the male witness demonstrated a significant effect of context, $B(1, N = 215) = 0.68, W = 5.55, p = .019, Exp(B) = 1.97, 95\% CI [1.12, 3.47]$. Participants supported confrontation by a male witness more in an office (72%) than gym (55%). Notably, the effect of target response, $B(1, N = 215) = -0.04, W = 0.02, p = .879, Exp(B) = 0.96, 95\% CI [0.55, 1.68]$, and the target response x context interaction, $B(1, N = 215) = -1.01, W = 2.93, p = .087, Exp(B) = 0.37, 95\% CI [0.12, 1.16]$, were not significant, see Figure 5.

Figure 4

Support for target confrontation across gym and office contexts and confronting and passive target responses in Experiment 2.

**Figure 5**

Support for witness confrontation across gym and office contexts and confronting and passive target responses in Experiment 2.



In summary, Experiment 2 demonstrated that when a female target provided a clear disapproval of the sexist comment, she was evaluated more negatively than when she was passive (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Gulker et al., 2013). Furthermore, the results provided new evidence that the consequences for women who confront in social settings may be particularly harsh. These findings suggest that unlike hypothetical support for confrontation, when presented with a concrete response, peripheral cues such as context were considered. Furthermore, the results indicated that the target's behavior impacted evaluations of both the witness and perpetrator. In particular, these actors were evaluated more negatively when the target was confronting than passive, and for the perpetrator, this was only the case in the office. In addition, when asked whether the target should confront the perpetrator, approximately 90% of participants reported that she should confront when she did, compared to only about half of participants when she was passive. Together these findings suggest that the actions of the target of sexism matter – when she does not confront, perceptions of the perpetrator within an office context are more positive and support for confrontation declines.

Experiment 3

Methods

Participants and Design

Experiment 3 investigated the impact of confrontation by a male witness. Participants were randomly assigned to context and witness response condition in a 2 Context (Gym vs. Office) x 2 Witness Response (Confront vs. Passive) x 3 Actor (Target vs. Witness vs. Perpetrator) mixed design with actor as a within-subjects variable. The data from 202 (110 women; age range: 17-33 years old, $M_{age} = 19.27$, $SD_{age} = 2.20$; race: 38% Asian; 20% White; 11% Middle Eastern; 11% Black; 20% other/undisclosed) participants were included in the analyses. A sensitivity analysis using G*Power found that our final sample could detect effects

of $f = 0.12$ ($\eta^2 = 0.01$) for the predicted Context x Target Response x Actor interaction on actor evaluations (power = .80, $\alpha = .05$, M observed correlation among repeated measures, $r = .04$).

Procedure

The procedure was similar to Experiment 2 with one exception; a male witness rather than a female target responded to the perpetrator's comment. In particular, participants were informed that Ralph, the witness, *responds by saying: "That's not OK, Jack" or by smiling politely without saying anything.*

Results and Discussion

Evaluative Ratings

Evaluations of the behavior and likeability were highly correlated ($r = .30$ to $.60$) and mean composite scores were created for each actor. To examine the effects of witness response and context on evaluations, we conducted a 2 Context (Gym vs. Office) x 2 Witness Response (Confront vs. Passive) x 3 Actor (Target vs. Witness vs. Perpetrator) mixed ANOVA with actor as a within-subjects factor. The main effect of actor was significant, $F(2, 197) = 165.91$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.63$, with the perpetrator ($M = 2.69$, $SD = 1.53$) evaluated less positively than the target ($M = 4.73$, $SD = 1.38$), $t(214) = -13.82$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.58$, 95% CI [-2.33, -1.75], and the witness ($M = 5.56$, $SD = 2.06$), $t(214) = -16.16$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.64$, 95% CI [-3.22, -2.52].

Notably, the target was evaluated less positively than the witness, $t(214) = -4.91$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.47$, 95% CI [-1.17, -0.50]. A main effect of witness response was significant, $F(1, 198) = 6.96$, $p = .006$, $\eta^2 = 0.04$, in which the actors were evaluated less positively when the witness was passive ($M = 4.14$, $SD = 1.15$) than confronting ($M = 4.51$, $SD = 0.78$).

Although the actor x witness response interaction was significant, $F(2, 197) = 14.90$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.13$, the three-way interaction was not, $F(2, 197) = 0.95$, $p = .389$, $\eta^2 = 0.01$. Simple

effects analyses related to the two-way interaction demonstrated that the witness was evaluated less positively when he was passive ($M = 4.85$, $SD = 1.94$) than confronting ($M = 6.26$, $SD = 1.93$), $F(1, 202) = 27.19$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.12$, see Figure 7. In contrast, the effect of witness response on evaluations of the target, $F(1, 202) = 0.01$, $p = .997$, $\eta^2 < .01$, and perpetrator, $F(1, 202) = 2.14$, $p = .145$, $\eta^2 = 0.01$, were not significant, see Figure 6 and 8.

Figure 6

Target evaluations across gym and office contexts and confronting and passive witness responses in Experiment 3. Error bars represent the standard error of the mean.

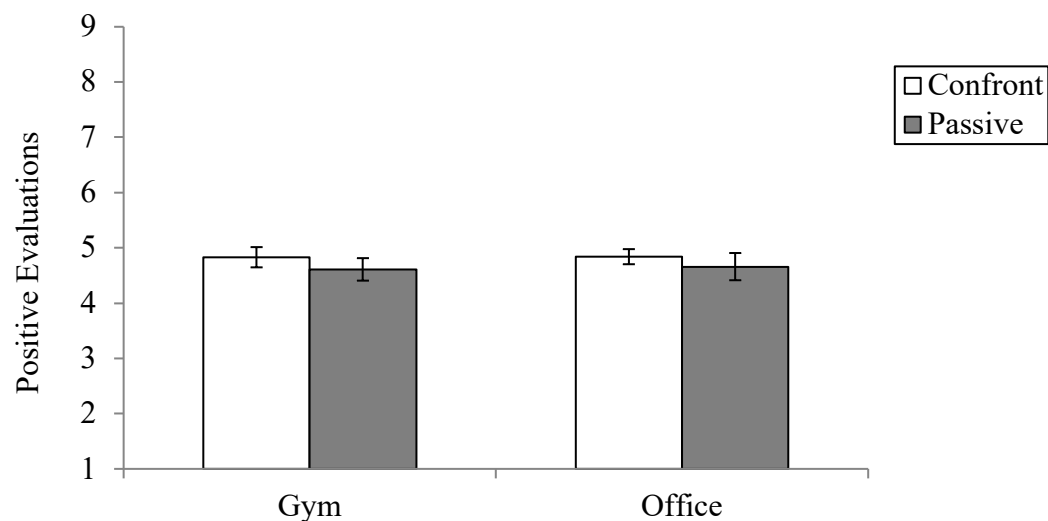
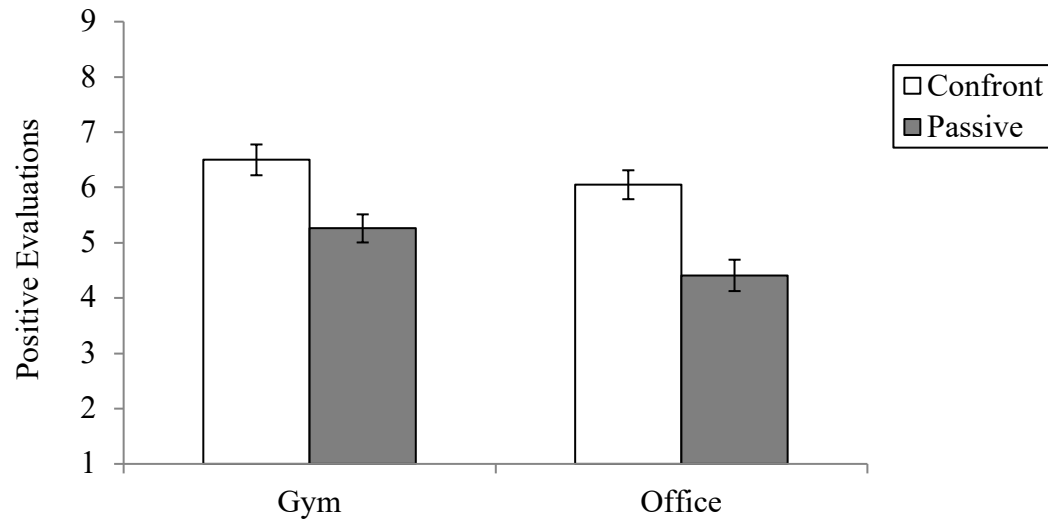
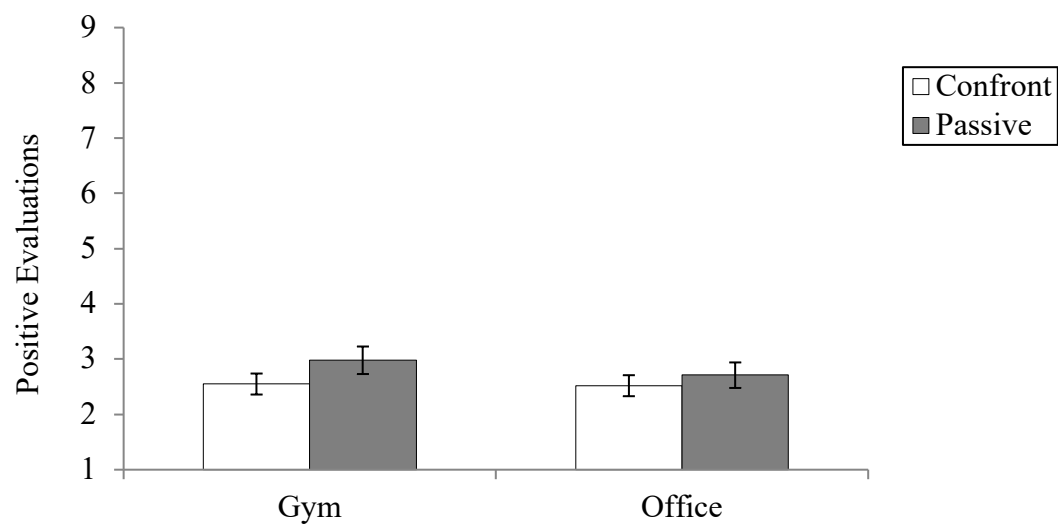


Figure 7

Witness evaluations across gym and office contexts and confronting and passive witness responses in Experiment 3. Error bars represent the standard error of the mean.

**Figure 8**

Perpetrator evaluations across gym and office contexts and confronting and passive witness responses in Experiment 3. Error bars represent the standard error of the mean.



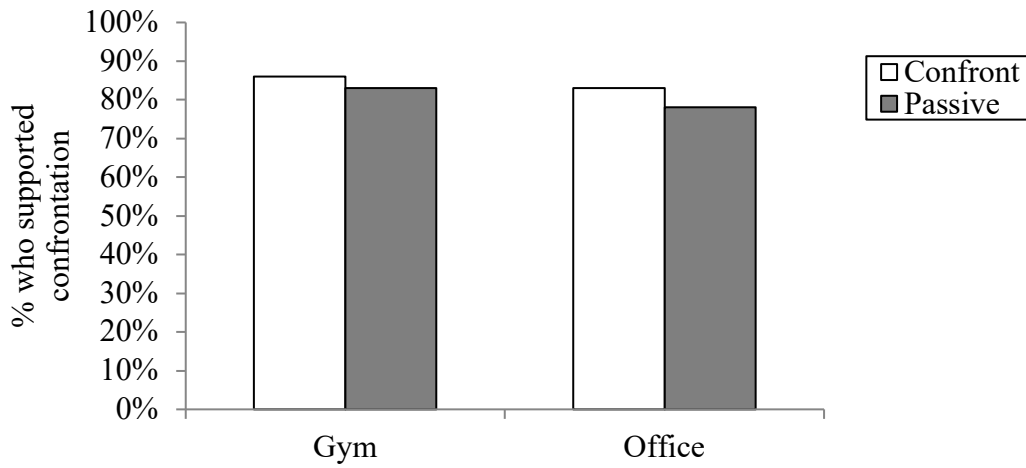
Support for Confrontation

To examine whether participants believed the target or witness should confront a sexist comment (yes vs. no) after reading about a specific response from a male witness, we conducted two logistic regression analyses that tested the effect of context (office = 0, gym = 1) and witness response (confront = 0, passive = 1). The results related to the female target for witness response, $B(1, N = 202) = -0.30$, $W = 0.67$, $p = .412$, $Exp(B) = 0.74$, 95% CI [0.36, 1.53], and the context by witness response two-way interaction, $B(1, N = 202) = 0.10$, $W = 0.02$, $p = .897$, $Exp(B) = 1.10$, 95% CI [0.26, 4.73], were not significant. In general, most participants reported that the female target should confront (78%-86%), regardless of witness response and context, see Figure 9. The results related to the male witness demonstrated a significant effect of witness response, $B(1, N = 202) = -1.03$, $W = 9.08$, $p = .002$, $Exp(B) = 0.36$, 95% CI [.19, .68]. Participants reported that the witness should confront more often when he was confronting (82%) than passive (61%). The context x witness response interaction, $B(1, N = 202) = -0.22$, $W = 0.11$, $p = .737$, $Exp(B) = 0.81$, 95% CI [0.22, 2.89], was not significant, see Figure 10.

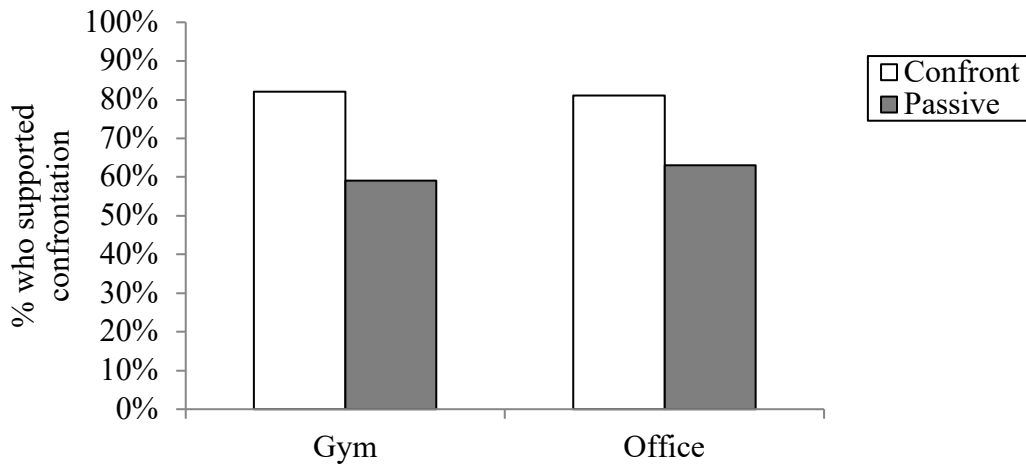
In summary, the results from Experiment 3 indicate that the impact of the confrontation by a male witness was limited to witness ratings and was not qualified by context. That is, while a male witness was evaluated more positively when he confronted than when he was passive, his behavior did not impact evaluations of the target or perpetrator. Furthermore, more participants reported that the witness should confront, when he confronted than was passive.

Figure 9

Support for target confrontation across gym and office contexts and confronting and passive witness responses in Experiment 3.

**Figure 10**

Support for witness confrontation across gym and office contexts and confronting and passive witness responses in Experiment 3.



General Discussion

In October 2016, candidate Donald Trump was caught on tape making sexist comments. When confronted by the media, his response was that “This was locker room banter, a private conversation that took place many years ago” (Millstein, 2016). This statement suggests that in a more social context, such behaviors are less reprehensible and less worthy of confrontation. In the present research, we specifically investigated the impact of context on processes related to confronting sexism. In doing so, we extended this literature in three important ways by examining how context impacts support for confrontation, as well as the barriers and benefits of confrontation for female targets and male witnesses.

Impact of Context on Whether We Should Confront

According to CLT, when presented with hypothetical events, people tend to process information on a more abstract level and focus more on core values such as egalitarianism and less on peripheral cues such as context (Trope & Liberman, 2010). In line with this theorizing, in Experiment 1 we found that when a response to sexism by a target or witness was not provided, most participants reported that the female target (84%) and male witness (64%) should confront the perpetrator of a sexist comment. Notably, when the scenario included responses by the target (Experiment 2) and witness (Experiment 3), participants’ beliefs about whether an actor should confront were moderated by these responses. Specifically, more participants believed that the target (92%) and witness (82%) should confront after the actor confronted than when she (57%) or he (61%) was passive. Furthermore, as predicted, these findings were not qualified by context.

These results suggest that when presented with a sexist event and no information about confrontation, participants’ responses may be driven by injunctive norms about socially appropriate behavior, in which you *should* confront sexism (Cialdini et al., 1990). However,

when provided with an actual response by a target or witness, participants' responses may also be influenced by descriptive norms about what other people do. As demonstrated by the #MeToo movement, increasing the prevalence of confronting sexism can have a ripple effect, encouraging greater support for confrontation (Kawakami et al., 2019; Zacharek et al., 2017).

Impact of Context on Confronter and Perpetrator Evaluations

In contrast, when presented with concrete instances of confrontation, according to CLT, people tend to process information on a lower level and be more influenced by the situation and implicit biases rather than loftier values (Kawakami et al., 2019; Trope & Liberman, 2010). In these less hypothetical events, abstract, principle-based values may even be reversed. As such, when the female target was confronting rather than passive in Experiment 2, she was evaluated less positively, and this was especially the case in the social compared to the work context, wherein expectations about addressing sexism are more formalized. The pattern of results was markedly different, however, for the male witness. When he was confronting rather than passive in Experiment 3, he was evaluated more positively across contexts, potentially because there are fewer explicit norms related to confronters who are men. In summary, although participants reported that both a female target and male witness should confront sexism (though to a less extent for the witness), this action came with social costs for the target but not the witness, especially in the social context.

The present research also investigated the impact of confrontation on perpetrator evaluations. Notably, when the target was confronting rather than passive in a work context in Experiment 2, the perpetrator was judged particularly negatively. In contrast, the witness' actions did not impact ratings of the perpetrator. These findings underline the power of the target. While

a target may suffer negative consequences for confronting sexism, her response, not the witness', has important implications for perceptions of the perpetrator and are context dependent.

Future Research

An important next step in this research is to determine the mechanisms by which social contexts impact confrontation processes. In accordance with CLT, we suggest that hypothetical versus actual situations influence responding according to higher level core values rather than specific contexts (Trope & Liberman, 2010; Wilson & Gilbert, 2005). However, future experiments should explore other hypothetical vs. actual contexts and should vs. evaluative questions to explore this assumption. Moreover, we proposed that in work settings, recommendations related to confronting bias may be more explicit and formalized than in social settings. Further research should also measure and manipulate this aspect of contexts. For example, would having explicit confrontation expectations in social settings result in less negative evaluations of confronting female targets? While the present findings suggest that at times for certain responses, contexts matter, examining a broader array of contexts would be informative.

To further advance this research, it is important to move beyond scenarios to having participants actually experiencing situations in which people confront bias (Karmali et al., 2017; Kawakami et al., 2009; Woodzicka & LaFrance, 2001). For example, participants could interact online in different contexts with confederates acting as targets, witnesses, and perpetrators. Attempts to assess evaluations of these actors in less explicit ways would also allow researchers to rule out impression formation processes and demand characteristics. Including alternative sexist comments and types of confrontation and passive responses (e.g., a lack of response) is also recommended to understand the generalizability of the present results.

Although past research has found participant gender differences in the perception of confronters (Dodd et al., 2001), in the present studies, gender did not impact perceptions of independent actors, the perpetrator behavior, or support for confrontation. Although we did not expect gender to qualify our primary predictions, to investigate the impact of gender in future research, larger samples are recommended. Furthermore, although we focused on confrontation by a male witness, future studies should also examine whether a female witness would experience benefits like the male witness or costs like the female target when she responds to sexism against another woman (Eliezer & Major, 2012).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the current research highlights the importance of confronting sexism. While a female target may bear costs for standing up against sexist comments, especially in a social context, her behavior can increase negative perceptions of the perpetrator and support for confrontation. Alternatively, when a male witness stands against sexism as an ally, he can garner praise for his actions, as well as support for confrontation. Because confrontation can reduce sexism, future research is necessary to better understand confrontation processes. The present studies, however, suggest that changing expectations related to responding to sexism in different contexts has the potential to create climates in which confrontation may be less costly.

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Supplemental Materials

Participant Exclusion Information

In Experiment 1, 312 students were recruited. However, the data from 70 students (48 for failing attention checks, 1 for language requirements, and 21 for missing data) were excluded from analyses, resulting in 242 participants. In Experiment 2, 264 students were recruited. However, the data from 49 students (3 for language requirements, 37 for failing attention checks or response errors, and 9 for missing data) were excluded from analyses, resulting in 215 participants. In Experiment 3, 281 undergraduates were recruited. However, the data from 79 participants (56 for failing attention checks and 23 for missing data) were excluded from analyses, resulting in 202 students.

Comprehension Questions and Attention Checks

Experiment 1

To ensure participants read and understood the scenario, they were asked the following questions:

“Who made the comment?”

“Who was the comment directed toward?”

“Who witnessed the comment?”

Upon completing the study, participants were presented with the following questions as an attention check:

“What did Jack do/say?”

“Who was Jack’s comment directed toward?”

“Who witnessed Jack’s comment?”

“Where did the scenario take place?”

Studies 2 and 3

To ensure participants had read and understood the scenario, they were asked the following questions:

“Who made the first comment?”

“Who was the first comment directed toward?”

“Who witnessed the first comment?”

“How did [Eileen (Experiment 2)/Ralph (Experiment 3)] respond to the comment?”

Upon completion of the studies, participants were asked the same attention checks used in Experiment 1, with one additional question:

“What was [Eileen (Experiment 2)/Ralph (Experiment 3)]’s response to Jack?”

Offensiveness and Typicality of Perpetrator, Target, and Witness Behavior

Experiment 2

Participants in Experiment 2 were presented with items related to the social acceptability, offensiveness, and typicality of the behavior of each actor and asked to respond on 9-point scales. Given a significant correlation between social acceptability (reverse-scored) and offensiveness items across actors ($r = .32$ to $.37$), a composite measure of offensiveness was created for each actor based on the mean of the responses across the two items.

To investigate the effect of target response and context on evaluations of the perceived offensiveness and typicality of the actors’ behavior, we conducted a 2 Context (gym vs. office) x 2 Target response (confront vs. passive) x 3 Actor (target vs. witness vs. perpetrator) mixed ANOVA on each variable with context and target response as between-subject and actor as a within-subject factors.⁷ Analyses related to the offensiveness of the target, witness, and

⁷ Only the main effect of gender on offensiveness ratings was significant, $F(1, 207) = 7.97, p = .005, \eta^2 = 0.04$, with women ($M = 4.80; SD = 0.93$) evaluating the actors’ behavior as more offensive than men ($M = 4.42, SD = 0.10$).

perpetrator's behaviors revealed a main effect of actor, $F(2, 210) = 344.21, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.77$.

Simple effects analyses demonstrated that the perpetrator's behavior ($M = 6.94, SD = 1.66$) was perceived as more offensive than the target's behavior ($M = 2.52, SD = 1.48$), $t(214) = 25.70, p < .001, d = 1.02, 95\% CI [4.07, 4.75]$ and the witness' behavior ($M = 4.40, SD = 1.80$), $t(214) = 17.86, p < .001, d = 0.50, 95\% CI [2.25, 2.80]$. The witness' behavior was also perceived as more offensive than the target's behavior, $t(214) = 12.02, p < .001, d = 0.38, CI [1.57, 2.19]$. The actor x context x target response interaction was not significant, $F(2, 210) = 1.76, p = .175, \eta^2 = 0.02$.

Analyses related to the effect of context and target response on typicality of the target, witness, and perpetrator's behavior also revealed a main effect of actor, $F(2, 210) = 17.27, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.14$. Simple effects analyses indicated that the witness' behavior ($M = 6.45, SD = 1.97$), was perceived as less typical than the perpetrator's behavior ($M = 5.57, SD = 2.19$), $t(214) = -5.15, p < .001, d = 0.42, 95\% CI [-1.22, -.54]$, and the target's behavior ($M = 5.57, SD = 2.13$), $t(214) = -4.66, p < .001, d = 0.43, 95\% CI [-1.25, -.51]$. Typicality ratings of the perpetrator and target's behavior did not differ, $t(214) < 0.01, p = 1.000, d = 0.00, 95\% CI [-4.07, 4.07]$. The actor x context x target response interaction was not significant, $F(2, 210) = 0.35, p = .706, \eta^2 < 0.01$. In accordance with the results of Experiment 1, the perpetrator's behavior was perceived as offensive and somewhat typical.

Experiment 3

A main effect of participant gender was found on typicality ratings, $F(1, 207) = 21.92, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.10$, with women ($M = 6.26, SD = 1.47$) evaluating the actors' behavior as more typical than men ($M = 5.43, SD = 1.09$). The gender by actor interaction was also significant, $F(2, 207) = 6.22, p = .002, \eta^2 = 0.06$. Simple effects analyses revealed that women ($M = 6.32, SD = 2.09$) found the perpetrator's behavior to be more typical than men ($M = 4.76, SD = 2.01$), $F(1, 215) = 31.21, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.13$, and they also found the male witness' behavior ($M = 6.79, SD = 2.02$) to be more typical than did men ($M = 6.08, SD = 1.86$), $F(2, 215) = 7.29, p = .007, \eta^2 = 0.03$. Men ($M = 5.46, SD = 1.95$) and women ($M = 5.67, SD = 2.29$) did not differ in their ratings of the typicality of the target's behavior, $F(1, 215) = 0.50, p = .482, \eta^2 < 0.01$.

Participants in Experiment 3 were presented with items related to the socially acceptability, offensiveness, and typicality of the behavior of each actor and asked to respond on 9-point scales. Given a significant correlation between socially acceptability and offensiveness (reverse-scored) items across actors ($r = .20$ to $.57$), a composite measure of offensiveness was created for each actor based on the mean of the responses across the two items.

To investigate the effect of witness response and context on evaluations of the perceived offensiveness and typicality of the perpetrator's behavior, we conducted a 2 Context (gym vs. office) x 2 Witness response (confront vs. passive) x 3 Actor (target vs. witness vs. perpetrator) mixed ANOVA with context and witness response as between-subject and actor as a within-subject factors.⁸ The analyses revealed a main effect of actor on the offensiveness of the target, witness, and perpetrator's behavior, $F(2, 197) = 274.20, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.74$. Simple effects analyses demonstrated that the perpetrator's behavior ($M = 6.93, SD = 1.70$) was perceived as more offensive than the target's behavior ($M = 3.50, SD = 1.47$), $t(201) = 22.03, p < .001, d = 1.56, 95\% CI [3.12, 3.73]$, and the witness' behavior ($M = 3.61, SD = 2.09$), $t(201) = 17.09, p < .001, d = 1.20, 95\% CI [2.94, 3.70]$. Ratings of the offensiveness of the target's and the witness' behavior were not significantly different, $t(201) = -0.60, p = .548, d = 0.04, 95\% CI [-0.44, 0.24]$.

⁷ All main effects and interactions related to participant gender on offensiveness of the actors' behavior were not significant, $p > .081$.

There was a main effect of participant gender on perceived typicality, $F(1, 194) = 7.81, p = .006, \eta^2 = 0.04$, with women rating the actors' behavior as more typical ($M = 5.95, SD = 1.39$) than men ($M = 5.42, SD = 1.33$). The two-way interaction between participant gender and actor was also significant, $F(2, 193) = 9.99, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.09$. Simple effects analyses reveal that although men (target: $M = 5.35, SD = 2.10$; witness: $M = 5.79, SD = 1.92$), and women (target: $M = 5.59, SD = 2.02$; witness: $M = 5.66, SD = 2.40$), did not differ in perceptions of the target behavior, $F(1, 202) = 0.70, p = .404, \eta^2 < 0.01$, or witness behavior, $F(1, 202) = 0.18, p = .676, \eta^2 < 0.01$ typicality, men ($M = 5.11, SD = 2.10$) rated the perpetrator's behavior as less typical than women ($M = 6.59, SD = 1.91$), $F(1, 202) = 27.60, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.12$. The two-way interaction between participant gender and witness response condition on typicality ratings was also significant $F(1, 194) = 4.52, p = .035, \eta^2 = 0.02$. While men did not differ in their ratings of typicality when the witness was passive ($M = 5.64, SD = 1.47$) or confronting ($M = 5.21, SD = 1.17$), $F(1, 92) = 2.50, p = .117, \eta^2 = 0.03$, women rated the actors as more typical when the witness was passive ($M = 6.55, SD = 1.28$) than confronting ($M = 5.34, SD = 1.23$), $F(1, 110) = 26.10, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.20$.

Although the witness response by actor two-way interaction was significant, $F(2, 197) = 34.12, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.26$, the witness response x context x actor interaction was not significant, $F(2, 197) = 1.36, p = .260, \eta^2 = 0.01$. Simple effects analyses related to the two-way interaction indicate that the effect of witness response on perceived offensiveness of the target's behavior, $F(1, 202) = 0.13, p = .721, \eta^2 < 0.01, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.34, 0.48]$, and the perpetrator's behavior, $F(1, 202) = 0.69, p = .406, \eta^2 < 0.01, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.67, 0.27]$, was not significant. In contrast, the witness' behavior was perceived to be less offensive when confronting ($M = 2.46, SD = 1.61$) than passive ($M = 4.78, SD = 1.86$), $F(1, 202) = 89.91, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.31, 95\% \text{ CI } [1.84, 2.81]$.

Analyses related to the perceived typicality of the actors' behavior revealed a significant main effect of witness response, $F(1, 198) = 22.10, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.10$. All behaviors were rated as more typical when the witness was passive ($M = 6.15, SD = 1.43$) than confronting ($M = 5.27, SD = 1.20$). Although the actor x witness response two-way interaction was significant, $F(2, 197) = 5.04, p = .007, \eta^2 = 0.05$, the actor by context by target response interaction was not, $F(2, 197) = .108, p = .898, \eta^2 < 0.01$. Simple effects analyses related to the two-way interaction revealed that while there was no effect of witness response on typicality ratings of the target, $F(1, 202) = 1.20, p = .275, \eta^2 < 0.01$, participants rated the witness' behavior as more typical when he was passive ($M = 6.51, SD = 1.96$) than confronting ($M = 4.95, SD = 2.15$), $F(1, 202) = 29.09, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.13$. Participants also rated the perpetrator's behavior as more typical when the witness was passive ($M = 6.30, SD = 2.01$) than confronting ($M = 5.54, SD = 2.17$), $F(2, 202) = 6.66, p = .011, \eta^2 = 0.03$. The actor by context by target response interaction was not significant, $F(2, 197) = 0.11, p = .898, \eta^2 < 0.01$.

In summary, the results of Experiment 3 provide further evidence that the perpetrator's behavior was perceived as offensive and somewhat typical. This study, however, also

demonstrates that when the witness was passive compared to confrontational, his own behavior was deemed to be more offensive and less typical. Notably, when the witness is passive, the perpetrator's behavior was also considered to be more typical. The witness' behavior, however, did not influence perceptions of the target's behavior. As in Experiment 2, the context did not influence perceptions of offensiveness or typicality of the actors' behaviors.

**What Does Someone Who Stands Up to Intergroup Bias Look Like? Mental
Representations of Women, Men, and the Self Who Confront Sexism**

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Abstract

In part due to consequences associated with being a confronter, instances of sexism are rarely met with confrontation. Across four studies, using a reverse correlation paradigm, we examined the attributes associated with mental images of confronters vs. nonconfronters. Importantly, we examined perceptions of confronters who vary in identity by including female targets of sexism (Experiments 1 and 2), male witnesses of sexism (Experiment 3), and the self (Experiment 4). Experiments 1 and 2 revealed that female targets who confront sexism were perceived as less likeable and moral, but more powerful, masculine, and older than nonconfronters. In contrast, Experiment 3 revealed that male witnesses who confront were perceived as more likeable, moral, powerful, and younger than nonconfronters. Finally, Experiment 4 demonstrated that when women participants imagined themselves as confronters, their mental representations were perceived as less likeable and moral, but more masculine and older than when they imagined themselves as nonconfronters. The implications of these findings for confronting bias and allyship are discussed.

What Does Someone Who Stands Up to Intergroup Bias Look Like? Mental Representations of Women, Men, and the Self Who Confront Sexism

Prejudice against women is common in North American society (Graf, 2018; Plaut et al., 2015). For instance, college women report experiencing one to two sexist incidents per week (Swim et al., 2001). Despite its ubiquity, people rarely stand up to such instances of bias (Dickter & Newton, 2013; Kawakami et al., 2019). For example, in one study, only 16% of women confronted the perpetrator of a sexist comment (Swim & Hyers, 1999). Although women may expect to respond to such comments or actions, there is a discrepancy between how they believe they would respond and how they actually respond, with few women actually confronting gender bias (Brinkman et al., 2011; Kawakami et al., 2019; Mallett & Monteith, 2019). Particularly in the context of gender bias, people tend to trivialize responses to sexism and find sexism to be less worthy of confrontation than other forms of bias, such as racism (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Gulker et al., 2013). In the current research, to develop a more nuanced understanding of challenges to confronting, we examine mental images associated with confronters across varying identities.

Challenges and Opportunities of Confronting Sexism

One barrier to confronting sexism is the social cost associated with confrontation (Kaiser & Miller, 2001; Kawakami et al., 2019). Standing up to sexism, particularly as a female target (i.e., the recipient of the sexist act), is typically associated with negative implications. For example, women confronters are often perceived as overreacting or being overly sensitive, a complainer, or rude (Becker et al., 2011; Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Eliezer & Major, 2012; Gervais & Hillard, 2014). Moreover, when targets are aware of the negative reactions associated

with their confrontation, these perceptions can prevent them from confronting altogether (Shelton & Stewart, 2004).

Despite these implications, confronting intergroup bias such as sexism is critical due to its many positive downstream consequences (Mallett & Monteith, 2019). Confrontation has the power to promote a more inclusive climate, produce positive subsequent interactions, foster a sense of workplace belongingness, and reduce the likelihood of future stereotyping and prejudice (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2008; Czopp et al., 2006; Mallett & Wagner, 2011; Rattan & Dweck, 2018). Conversely, the absence of confrontation can have negative consequences such as eliciting negative reactions from ingroup members (Czopp, 2019; Kahn et al., 2015). With sexism in particular, women who fail to confront are perceived by others to be harming the reputation of other women and they themselves can experience negative emotions such as guilt (Becker & Barreto, 2014; Shelton et al., 2006). By ignoring rather than standing up to incidents of sexism, women can develop an increased tolerance for sexual harassment and decreased support for survivors (Mallett et al., 2019). Furthermore, ingroup support is stronger when a woman confronts the perpetrator of an explicitly sexist remark, compared to when she does not (Dodd et al., 2001). Finally, people look to others to determine how to confront, thus, a lack of confrontation could inadvertently signal to the offender and witnesses that not responding to sexism is acceptable (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2008; Vaccarino & Kawakami, 2021).

Confronter Identity

Notably, confrontation in the face of sexism is received differently based on who is confronting. Confrontation from nontarget group members (i.e., witnesses), compared to target group members can be seen as more valid and less driven by self-interest (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Rodin et al., 1990). In effect, when a target group member confronts bias, their

confrontation is perceived as being more of an overreaction than when the same confrontation is carried out by a nontarget or witness (Czopp & Monteith, 2003). In general, compared to women who confront sexism men are more effective and taken more seriously, and they are also less likely to encounter backlash as a result of their confrontation, underlining the importance of allyship (Ball & Branscombe, 2019; Drury & Kaiser, 2014; Hekman, et al., 2017). Due to their lack of presumed self-interest, confrontation to sexism by men tends to be perceived as more objective and legitimate, which allows male witnesses who confront to avoid the negative implications experienced by women (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Drury & Kaiser, 2014; Rasinski & Czopp, 2010).

While past research examines perceptions of confrontation across men and women who confront, the current research takes the novel approach of examining perceptions of a female target confronter both from an outside perspective as well as from a self-perspective. Examining these questions from a self-perspective is a critical goal, given the importance of our self-concept and its associated consequences (Oyserman et al., 2012). Considerable research in social psychology has demonstrated that people tend to engage in self-enhancement—seeing themselves more positively than others, perceiving their abilities, attributes, and personality traits as superior to the average person (Alicke & Govorun, 2005; Festinger, 1954; Zell et al., 2020). Thus, theorizing related to self-enhancement might suggest that a woman would be motivated to view herself more positively than other women when evaluating herself in the context of confrontation. In another vein, social identity theory emphasizes that a person’s self-concept and self-esteem are not only derived from their personal identity, but also from the groups to which the person belongs (Spears, 2011; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Thus, social identity theory research might suggest that in the context of confrontation, women would evaluate themselves the same

way they would other women since they are a part of the target group, and this identity is salient in this context. Consequently, an additional goal of the current research was to examine how perceptions of confronters are impacted when a woman pictures herself confronting or not confronting sexism. Since this examination of target confronters from the self-perspective is novel, we do not have specific predictions about whether women would view themselves more positively than when evaluating other women confronting, in line with self-enhancement theorizing, or instead, evaluate themselves similarly to how they would evaluate other members of their group (i.e., female targets).

Although confrontation by nontarget witnesses can be influential for defining bias and they are often able to avoid the social consequences incurred by target confronters, members of targeted groups are more likely to detect sexism in the first place and are furthermore likely to confront prejudice than nontargets (Dickter et al., 2012; Drury & Kaiser, 2014; Gulker et al., 2013). Moreover, confronting sexism as a woman can have unique benefits for the self such as an increased sense of competence, self-esteem, and empowerment (Gervais et al., 2010). Thus, it is important to examine perceptions of both target and ally confronters, as well as from the perspective of others and from the perspective of the self since each role and perspective can produce unique benefits.

The numerous benefits associated with confrontation, along with the lack of confrontation that actually takes place, emphasize the need to further examine perceptions associated with confronters of sexism. Specifically, examining perceptions of confronters can help inform why confrontation may not occur despite societal norms that endorse egalitarianism and support confrontation in theory (Crandall et al., 2002; Vaccarino & Kawakami, 2021).

Face Perception and Reverse Correlation

Importantly, a primary goal of the present research was to extend past findings related to perceptions of confronters of sexism by using a novel reverse correlation paradigm. We perceive and form judgements of others automatically, often quickly and effortlessly (Dunton & Fazio, 1997; Willis & Todorov, 2006). Furthermore, people form impressions of others based on their membership in particular social groups (Brewer, 1988; Fiske & Neuberg, 1990). Notably, these categorization processes can lead to negative evaluations, stereotypic associations, and discriminatory behaviour (Dovidio, et al., 2002; Kawakami et al., 2017). Reverse correlation is a technique that, when applied to social psychological research, can identify specific mental templates for various traits and social categories, allowing us to visualize and quantify people's mental representations of group members (Dotsch & Todorov, 2012; Dotsch et al., 2008). Notably, research using reverse correlation finds that our prejudices can bias how we conceptualize a person's facial appearance (Dotsch et al., 2008; Ratner et al., 2014). In particular, this paradigm yields images that depict participants' mental representations of a social group, and these representations reflect their inner biases and stereotypical traits associated with that group, which are then reflected in independent participants' ratings of the images (Dotsch et al., 2008). This methodology is particularly useful since it can overcome limitations typically raised for explicit ratings, which can be vulnerable to subjective distortions and social desirability biases. For example, research examining perceptions related to welfare recipients used reverse correlation to demonstrate that participants' mental image of a welfare recipient appeared more Black and was attributed stereotypical traits associated with this racial group compared to a nonwelfare recipient (Brown-Iannuzzi et al., 2017). Thus, research using this paradigm can depict underlying associations we may hold of members of particular social categories.

In the present research, we utilized a reverse correlation paradigm in a novel way to examine the mental representations of people who perform certain actions. Specifically, we investigated participants' mental images associated with characteristics of women, men, and the self confronting versus not confronting sexism. Although the bulk of past research has examined perceptions of confronters in terms of explicit evaluative ratings (Kaiser & Miller, 2001; Vaccarino & Kawakami, 2021), the current research extends these findings by exploring visual representations of the faces of confronters. This technique is useful in the present context because it circumvents social rules and norms related to reporting stereotypes about confronting sexism. In particular, in accordance with a typical reverse correlation paradigm, participants in a first phase produced images that represent confronters or nonconfronters. In a second phase, a separate group of participants who were not aware of any social categorization classifications or details related to the production of these representations, evaluated these images. Thus, the reverse correlation method allowed us to assess the associated stereotypes of mental representations of a female target, male witness, or self who confronts the perpetrator of a sexist comment, in a context devoid of references to sexism. Because we find that participants' hypothetical expectations relating to confronting prejudice are often misaligned with their behaviours or their judgements (Crosby & Wilson, 2015; Karmali et al., 2017; Kawakami et al., 2009, 2019; Shelton & Stewart, 2004; Swim & Hyers, 1999; Vaccarino & Kawakami, 2021), the present research aimed to demonstrate the automatic biases we associate with confronters, using a more subtle, implicit method.

Characteristics of Confronters

The current paper seeks to examine the mental representations of confronters and how they are perceived, to better understand and thus address confronter backlash. In particular, we

examined how confronting sexism impacts perceptions of female targets of sexism (Experiments 1 and 2), male witnesses of sexism (Experiment 3), and the self (Experiment 4) in terms of likeability, power, morality, masculinity, and age, all traits relevant to confrontation and gender (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2020; Batres et al., 2015; Boothroyd et al., 2005; Dickter et al., 2012; Eagly, 1987; Fiske et al., 2002; Gulker et al., 2013; Kaiser & Miller, 2001; Miller, 2000; Skitka, 2012; Szekeres et al., 2019; Vaccarino & Kawakami, 2021).

In general, people exhibit a pro-woman bias, women are typically liked more than men, and stereotypes associated with women focus on their warmth and likeability (Connor et al., 2023; Eagly & Mladinic, 1989; Fiske et al., 2002). Perceived likeability is an important outcome in social situations and is impacted by confrontation (Vaccarino & Kawakami, 2021). In particular, past research on confrontation and backlash demonstrates that female targets who confront tend to be evaluated as less likeable than those who do not confront, whereas male nontargets who confront do not incur these costs to likeability (Dickter et al., 2012; Gulker et al., 2013; Vaccarino & Kawakami, 2021). Using a novel paradigm related to reverse correlation, we expected to replicate this pattern. Specifically, we expected that images generated of female targets who confront would be seen as less likeable than those who do not confront. In contrast, we expected that images generated of male nontargets who do not confront would be seen as more likeable than those who do not confront. Importantly, the present research extends past work by exploring how likeability might be impacted when women imagine themselves as confronters or nonconfronters. While research related to self-enhancement would suggest participants might view themselves positively whether confronting or not, it is also possible that a woman's identity as a target experiencing sexism will lead her to rate herself as less likeable

when she is confronting than not confronting, similar to ratings of other female targets (Alicke & Govorun, 2005; Festinger, 1954; Spears, 2011; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Zell et al., 2020).

We also examined traits relating to morality. In situations of prejudice, people typically (and inaccurately) predict that they would confront the perpetrator of the bias (Brinkman et al., 2011; Karmali et al., 2017; Kawakami et al., 2009, 2019; Shelton & Stewart, 2004; Swim & Hyers, 1999). Notably, moral beliefs and perspectives are closely tied to how people believe things *should* be done (Skitka, 2010). To this end, when asked “*should* a target of sexism confront the perpetrator?”, 84% of participants report that confrontation is the correct course of action (Vaccarino & Kawakami, 2021). Notably, moral courage can be defined as a willingness to take a stand in defense of one’s own moral principles, even when others do not, suggesting morality and confrontation may be closely tied (Miller, 2000; Skitka, 2012). In accordance with this possibility, research demonstrates that thinking about the potential of moral failure related to not confronting prejudice, can motivate witnesses to stand up against bias (Szekeres et al., 2019). Despite this positive association between morality and confrontation, because a female target who confronts sexism receives more backlash than a male witness, we predicted that female targets who confront would be perceived as less moral than those who do not confront (Drury & Kaiser, 2014). In contrast, in line with the above theorizing about morality and taking a stand, we expected that male witnesses who confront bias would be perceived as more moral, just, and honorable, than ones who do not confront. Finally, we explored how women participants would evaluate themselves in terms of morality as confronters or nonconfronters.

We also examined perceptions of power associated with people who confront sexism. Power is an undeniably important social characteristic because it is associated with competence, rewards, freedom, approach motivation, positive affect, the ability to express one’s own ideas

with confidence, and taking action to achieve one's goals (Fiske et al., 2002; Galinsky et al., 2003, 2008; Karmali & Kawakami, 2023; Keltner et al., 2003). The things powerful people say tend to be salient and memorable, including in situations of prejudice (Barreto et al., 2010; Taylor & Fiske, 1978). While past research examined how a powerful perpetrator can negatively impact intentions and the likelihood of confrontation, the current research investigated perceptions of power attributed to the confronter (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2014; Shelton & Stewart, 2004). For female targets, despite backlash associated with women who confront sexism, past work has revealed that women who confront sexism have the unique ability to set norms in the situation, an indication of power (Kaiser & Miller, 2001; Vaccarino & Kawakami, 2021). Further, research demonstrates that people view those in positions of power as most responsible for confronting prejudice (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2020). Moreover, people with an increased (versus diminished) sense of power tend to punish transgressors more harshly, suggesting a link between confronting (i.e., punishing) a sexist perpetrator and attributions of power (Wiltermuth & Flynn, 2013). Thus, in the current work, we predicted that in domains related to power, perceptions of both female targets and male witnesses who stand up to sexism might actually be bolstered, compared to a nonconfronter. Lastly, we explored whether women participants would perceive the self differently in terms of power whether she was imagining herself as confronting or not.

Finally, we examined perceptions of masculinity and age. Gender stereotypes tend to associate men compared to women with dominant behaviours such as speaking out, thus confrontation is typically classified as masculine (Eagly, 1987; Fiske et al., 2002). Notably, perceived masculinity and age in facial features are positively related (Batres et al., 2015; Boothroyd et al., 2005). Age and power also tend to be related. Due to the associations between

confrontation and masculinity, age, and power, we expected that female target and male witness confronters would be perceived as more masculine and older than nonconfronters. We again explored whether women participants evaluating the self as a confronter or nonconfronter would view themselves differently in terms of masculinity and age.

Current Research

Across four experiments, using a reverse correlation paradigm (Dotsch & Todorov, 2012; Dotsch et al., 2008), we investigated how female targets, male witnesses, and the self are perceived when confronting versus remaining passive in the face of a sexist comment. First, we created average classification images of participants' mental representations of targets, witnesses, or the self, who were more (or less) likely to confront. Subsequently, a separate group of participants evaluated these classification images on a series of traits.

Specifically, in Experiment 1, we investigated how mental representations of women who confront sexism were judged on likeability, power, masculinity, and age. The goal of Experiment 2 was to replicate these findings related to likeability and power and additionally include trait ratings related to morality. We expected in both studies that compared to representations of women who did not confront, images of women who confronted would be judged as less likeable and moral, but more powerful, masculine, and older. In Experiment 3, we investigated mental representations of men who confront sexism. We expected that compared to representations of men who do not confront, men who confronted would be judged as more likeable, moral, powerful, masculine, and younger. Finally, in Experiment 4, we explored how mental representations of the self as a woman who confronts sexism would be judged on likeability, power, morality, masculinity, and age.

Experiment 1

The primary goal of Experiment 1 was to examine mental representations of female targets who confront sexism and associated trait attributions using a reverse correlation paradigm. In Phase 1, both men and women participants were instructed to select a series of images related to either a woman who confronted sexism or a woman who did not confront sexism. In Phase 2, separate participants rated the resulting images of Phase 1 on traits related to likeability, power, masculinity, and age.

Methods

Phase 1: Image Generation

Participants and Design. We recruited 231 students from an undergraduate research pool who received course credit for their participation. The data from 28 students were removed for not completing the experiment and the data from 1 student was removed for failing the attention check (see procedure section), leaving a final sample of 202 (102 women, 100 men) participants. Participants were randomly assigned to a condition in which they generated an image of a woman who confronts or does not confront sexism.

Procedure. Participants completed 400 trials of a forced-choice reverse correlation task. In accordance with previous research (Brinkman et al., 2017; Todorov et al., 2011), participants viewed two adjacent grayscale face images. Each face was created from the same base face image: a grayscale neutral average White female face taken from the Karolinska Face Database (Lundqvist et al., 1998), previously used in other reverse correlation studies (Dotsch & Todorov, 2012). Noise patterns were layered on the images, distorting facial features and structures such that each face appeared unique across trials (Dotsch & Todorov, 2012; Dotsch et al., 2008). Specifically, on each trial, a random noise pattern was applied to one of the images in the pair,

and the inverse of the noise pattern was added to the other image. The same noise patterns were used for all participants.

Across conditions, participants were told to imagine the following situation “*A man and a woman are having a conversation. The man says something sexist.*” Participants were then asked to describe the situation in their own words, to ensure they had read the scenario. Next, in the Confronter condition, participants were asked to “Choose the face that looks *more* like someone who would confront the person making the sexist comment.” In the Nonconfronter condition, participants were asked to “Choose the face that looks *less* like someone who would confront the person making the sexist comment.” Three attention checks were embedded in the study. In particular, the 400 trials were divided into 4 blocks of 100 trials. Following each of the three first blocks, participants were asked to select a specific letter from a list of five options (e.g., “Select the letter “C” from the choices below.”). Participants who responded to these attention checks incorrectly two or more times were excluded from the study.

Next, the ‘rcicr’ package in R (Dotsch, 2017) was used to create 4 classification images of a woman who confronts and does not confront sexism generated by men and women participants (see Figure 1). In particular, this program calculated the average of all noise patterns selected as the target category to create what is referred to as the classification image (CI). This CI is a representation of how men and women participants envision the face of a female target who confronts or does not confront (Dotsch et al., 2008; Dotsch & Todorov, 2012).

Figure 1***Classification Images from Phase 1 Experiment 1***

Confronter generated by women

Confronter generated by men



Nonconfronter generated by women

Nonconfronter generated by men

Phase 2: Classification Image Ratings

Participants and Design. A new sample of 208 students was recruited from an undergraduate research pool and received course credit for their participation. The data were removed from 6 students who did not complete the study, and 1 student for evidence of random responding (selecting the same rating for the majority of traits). The final sample was 201 (101 women, 100 men) participants in a 2 Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 (Confronter vs. Nonconfronter) x 2 Gender of Image Generator in Phase 1 (Woman vs. Man) x 3 Trait

(Likeability vs. Power vs. Masculinity) x 2 Participant Gender in Phase 2 (Woman vs. Man) mixed design, with only Participant Gender in Phase 2 as a between-subjects factor. A sensitivity analysis using G*Power (Faul et al., 2007) found that our final sample could detect a within-subjects effect of $\eta_p^2 = .01$ for the predicted 2-way Confront Condition in Phase 1 x Trait interaction (power = .80, $\alpha = .05$, r among repeated measures = .18, observed effect: $\eta_p^2 = .77$).

Procedure. In Phase 2, participants were presented with each of the four CIs created in Phase 1 (i.e., confronter generated by women, confronter generated by men, nonconfronter generated by women, nonconfronter generated by men) and were instructed to rate each image on a series of 12 traits on 9-point scales ranging from 1 (not at all) to 9 (extremely). These were traits related to the three main constructs of likeability (i.e., likeability, warmth, anger, happiness), power (i.e., power, competence, capability, dominance, submissiveness, leadership), and masculinity (i.e., masculinity, femininity). Participants also estimated the age of the person, using an open-ended format. Participants were presented with one image at a time and after completing all 13 ratings, the next CI was presented, until all ratings were completed for all 4 images. The order of the images and traits were randomized across participants.

To explore the factor structure of the 13 trait ratings, we conducted a Principal Components exploratory factor analysis using oblimin rotation for each of the four CI conditions. In particular, based on an inspection of the scree plot, we extracted a three-factor solution that accounted for 63.08% of the variance for ratings of the confronter generated by men, 57.98% of the variance for ratings of the confronter generated by women, 56.56% of the variance for ratings of the nonconfronter generated by men, and 55.54% of the variance for ratings of the nonconfronter generated by women. Factor 1 (confronter generated by men: eigenvalues = 3.04, 25.30% of the variance, confronter generated by women: eigenvalues = 2.71, 22.61% of the

variance, nonconfronter generated by men: eigenvalues = 3.28, 27.32% of the variance, nonconfronter generated by women: eigenvalues = 2.94, 24.47% of the variance) captured likeability related traits (warmth, likeability, happiness, and anger reverse-scored), Factor 2 (confronter generated by men: eigenvalues = 3.15, 26.28% of the variance, confronter generated by women: eigenvalues = 2.89, 24.12% of the variance, nonconfronter generated by men: eigenvalues = 2.45, 20.42% of the variance, nonconfronter generated by women: eigenvalues = 2.48, 20.62% of the variance) captured power-related traits (leadership, competence, capability, power and dominance), and Factor 3 (confronter generated by men: eigenvalues = 1.38, 11.50% of the variance, confronter generated by women: eigenvalues = 1.35, 11.25% of the variance, nonconfronter generated by men: eigenvalues = 1.06, 8.82% of the variance, nonconfronter generated by women: eigenvalues = 1.25, 10.45% of the variance) captured masculinity-related traits (masculinity and femininity reverse-scored). Based on these analyses, we created an index related to likeability (confronter generated by men $\alpha = .77$, confronter generated by women $\alpha = .68$, nonconfronter generated by men $\alpha = .79$, nonconfronter generated by women $\alpha = .75$), power (confronter generated by men $\alpha = .81$, confronter generated by women $\alpha = .76$, nonconfronter generated by men $\alpha = .76$, nonconfronter generated by women $\alpha = .72$), and masculinity (confronter generated by men $r = .55$, confronter generated by women $r = .48$, nonconfronter generated by men $r = .48$, nonconfronter generated by women $r = .47$). Submissiveness was removed from the model due its lack of fit with the conceptually relevant power factor.

Results and Discussion

We conducted a 2 Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 (Confronter vs. Nonconfronter) x 2 Gender of Image Generator in Phase 1 (Woman vs. Man) x 3 Trait (Likeability vs. Power vs.

Masculinity) x 2 Participant Gender in Phase 2 (Woman vs. Man) mixed ANOVA on trait ratings with only the last factor between-subjects (see Table 1 for an overview of effects). Results revealed a main effect of Confrontation Condition in Phase 1, $F(1, 199) = 83.51, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .30$, with Nonconfronters ($M = 4.87, SD = .57$) rated higher than Confronters ($M = 4.34, SD = .75$). A main effect of Trait was also found, $F(2, 199) = 58.22, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .23$. Simple effects analyses demonstrated that actors were rated higher on power ($M = 5.04, SD = .86$) than likeability ($M = 4.65, SD = .64$), $t(200) = 6.68, p < .001, d = .47, 95\% \text{ CI } [.27, .51]$ and masculinity ($M = 4.13, SD = 1.05$), $t(200) = 9.43, p < .001, d = .67, 95\% \text{ CI } [.72, 1.09]$. Actors were also rated higher on likeability than masculinity, $t(200) = 5.54, p < .001, d = .39, 95\% \text{ CI } [.33, .70]$.

The predicted 2-way Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 x Trait interaction was significant, $F(2, 199) = 667.31, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .77$. This interaction was qualified by the Gender of the Image Generator in Phase 1, with a significant 3-way Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 x Gender of Image Generator in Phase 1 x Trait interaction, $F(2, 199) = 3.20, p = .042, \eta_p^2 = .02$.

Table 1

Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 x Gender of Image Generator in Phase 1 x Trait x Participant Gender in Phase 2 mixed-design analysis of variance on trait ratings in Experiment 1.

Effect	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	η_p^2
Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 (C)	83.51	(1, 199)	< .001	.30
Gender of Image Generator in Phase 1 (G)	2.54	(1, 199)	.113	.01
Trait (T)	58.22	(2, 398)	< .001	.23
Participant Gender in Phase 2 (P)	1.74	(1, 199)	.189	.01
C x G	0.38	(1, 199)	.54	< .01
C x T	667.31	(2, 398)	< .001	.77
C x P	< 0.01	(1, 199)	.959	< .01
G x T	1.19	(2, 398)	.306	< .01
G x P	1.41	(1, 199)	.237	.01
T x P	1.29	(2, 398)	.277	.01
C x G x T	3.20	(1, 199)	.042	.02
C x G x P	0.38	(2, 398)	.539	< .01
C x T x P	< .01	(2, 398)	.998	< .01
G x T x P	0.29	(2, 398)	.707	< .01
C x G x T x P	0.68	(2, 398)	.506	< .01

Note. Statistically significant results are shown in bold.

To decompose the 3-way interaction, we examined each trait separately. For ratings of likeability, the 2-way Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 x Gender of Image Generator in Phase 1 interaction was significant, $F(1, 200) = 6.35$, $p = .012$, $\eta_p^2 = .031$. Simple effect analyses

revealed that images of confronters generated by women ($M = 2.51, SD = 1.12$) were rated as less likeable than nonconfronters ($M = 6.79, SD = 1.24$), $t(200) = 32.01, p < .001, d = 2.26$, 95% CI [-2.25, -2.00]. For images generated by men, a similar pattern was found with confronters ($M = 2.66, SD = 1.22$) rated as less likeable than nonconfronters ($M = 6.64, SD = 1.29$), $t(200) = 29.21, p < .001, d = 2.06$, 95% CI [-2.30, -1.82]. Although participants rated images generated by women and men who confront as less likeable than nonconfronters, this effect was larger for images generated by women ($M_{diff} = 4.29, SD = 1.89$), than images generated by men ($M_{diff} = 3.98, SD = 1.93$), $t(200) = 2.52, p = .006, d = .18$, 95% CI [.04, .32].

For ratings of power, the 2-way Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 x Gender of Image Generator in Phase 1 interaction was not significant, $F(1, 201) = 2.38, p = .124, \eta_p^2 = .012$. For images generated by both men and women, confronters ($M = 5.31, SD = 1.19$) were rated as more powerful than nonconfronters ($M = 4.77, SD = 1.00$), $F(1, 200) = 31.30, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .14$.

For masculinity ratings, the 2-way Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 x Gender of Image Generator in Phase 1 interaction was also nonsignificant, $F(1, 201) = .064, p = .800, \eta_p^2 < .01$. For images generated by both men and women, participants rated confronters ($M = 5.14, SD = 1.62$) as more masculine than nonconfronters ($M = 3.13, SD = 1.13$), $F(1, 200) = 234.22, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .54$.

We also conducted a 2 Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 (Confronter vs. Nonconfronter) x 2 Gender of Image Generator in Phase 1 (Woman vs. Man) x 2 Participant Gender in Phase 2 (Woman vs. Man) mixed ANOVA on estimates of the age of the person depicted in the CIs, with only Participant Gender in Phase 2 as a between-subjects factor (see

Table 2)⁹. The main effect of Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 was significant, with confronters ($M = 36.06$, $SD = 9.24$) rated as older than nonconfronters ($M = 22.19$, $SD = 7.30$), $F(1, 196) = 520.42$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .73$. The main effect of Gender of Image Generator was also significant, $F(1, 196) = 13.59$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$, with images generated by women ($M = 29.87$, $SD = 7.97$) rated as older than images generated by men ($M = 28.32$, $SD = 7.43$). The 2-way Confront x Participant Gender in Phase 2 was also significant, $F(1, 196) = 3.94$, $p = .049$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$. Simple effects analyses indicated that women participants rated confronters as older ($M = 36.03$, $SD = 10.03$) than nonconfronters ($M = 20.95$, $SD = 7.88$), $F(1, 196) = 313.79$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .62$. Likewise, men rated confronters as older ($M = 36.09$, $SD = 8.43$) than nonconfronters ($M = 23.42$, $SD = 6.51$), $F(1, 196) = 212.62$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .52$. Although both men and women participants rated women who confront as older than nonconfronters, this effect was larger for women participants ($M_{diff} = 15.08$, $SD = 8.85$) than men ($M_{diff} = 12.67$, $SD = 8.25$), $t(196) = 1.98$, $p = .049$, $d = .28$, 95% CI [$<.01$, $.56$].

⁹ A datapoint from one participant was removed, due to a possible typographical error (age estimate = 1980).

Table 2

Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 x Gender of Image Generator in Phase 1 x Participant Gender in Phase 2 mixed-design analysis of variance on age estimates in Experiment 1.

Effect	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	η_p^2
Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 (C)	520.42	(1, 196)	< .001	.73
Gender of Image Generator in Phase 1 (G)	13.59	(1, 196)	< .001	.07
Participant Gender in Phase 2 (P)	1.55	(1, 196)	.214	.01
C x G	2.88	(1, 196)	.091	.01
C x P	3.94	(1, 196)	.049	.02
G x P	0.24	(1, 196)	.622	< .01
C x G x P	< 0.01	(1, 196)	.978	< .01

Note. Statistically significant results are shown in bold.

In summary, participants' mental representations of a female target who confronts sexism were perceived by independent raters as being less likeable, more powerful, more masculine, and older than nonconfronters. Notably, while confronters were perceived as less likeable and older than nonconfronters for CIs generated by both men and women participants in Phase 1, these effects were stronger for images generated by women. Together, these findings demonstrate that people hold visual perceptions of women who confront that are distinct from those who do not confront, as indicated by associated trait attributions.

Experiment 2

In Experiment 2, we sought to replicate the findings in Experiment 1 related to perceptions of female targets who confront sexism in terms of likeability and power. Moreover, we extended these results by exploring whether female target confronters would be rated as more

or less moral than nonconfronters. To achieve these goals, we used the CIs generated in Phase 1 of Experiment 1. Because the general pattern of results in Experiment 1 was not affected by Gender of Image Generator in Phase 1, we created group-level CIs from Experiment 1 Phase 1 based on Confrontation Condition only (not split by Gender of Image Generator). Specifically, in Experiment 2, naïve participants rated only two CIs: a female target confronter and nonconfronter.

Methods

Participants and Design

We recruited 93 participants (45 women, 48 men) from Prolific Academic who were naïve to how the CIs in Phase 1 in Experiment 1 were created, in a 2 Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 (Confronter vs. Nonconfronter) x 3 Trait (Likeability vs. Power vs. Morality) x 2 Participant Gender in Phase 2 (Woman vs. Man) mixed ANOVA with only Participant Gender in Phase 2 as a between-subjects factor. Participants were compensated approximately \$0.96 USD for their participation. A sensitivity analysis using G*Power (Faul et al., 2007) found that our final sample could detect an effect of $\eta_p^2 = .02$ for the predicted 2-way Confront Condition in Phase 1 x Trait interaction (power = .80, $\alpha = .05$, r among repeated measures = .23, observed effect: $\eta_p^2 = .62$).

Procedure

Using the responses from Phase 1 Experiment 1, we created average images of female target Confronters and Nonconfronters (not split by gender of image generator), using the ‘rcicr’ package in R (see Experiment 1, Dotsch, 2017; see Figure 2).

Figure 2***Classification Images from Phase 1 Experiment 1, used in Experiment 2***

Participants were presented with CIs of a confronter and a nonconfronter and were instructed to rate the images on 9 traits on 9-point scales ranging from 1 (not at all) to 9 (extremely). In accordance with the trait constructs from Experiment 1, we created an index of likeability by taking the mean of ratings of warmth, likeability, and happiness (Confronter: $\alpha = .769$; Nonconfronter: $\alpha = .842$) an index of power by taking the mean ratings of leadership, power and dominance ratings, (Confronter: $\alpha = .742$; Nonconfronter: $\alpha = .775$), and an index of morality by taking the mean ratings of moral, ethical and honourable ratings (Confronter: $\alpha = .921$; Nonconfronter: $\alpha = .917$). Participants completed all 9 ratings for each image before moving onto the other CI. The order of the images as well as the order of the traits were randomized across participants.

Results and Discussion

We conducted a 2 Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 (Confronter vs. Nonconfronter) x 3 Trait (Likeability vs. Power vs. Morality) x 2 Participant Gender in Phase 2 (Woman vs. Man)

mixed ANOVA on trait ratings with only Participant Gender as between-subjects factor (see Table 3). The main effect of Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 was significant, $F(1, 91) = 116.08, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .56$, with nonconfronters ($M = 4.98, SD = 1.02$) rated higher than confronters ($M = 3.81, SD = .94$). The main effect of Trait was also significant, $F(2, 182) = 16.38, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .15$. Simple effect analyses indicated that actors were rated higher on power ($M = 4.72, SD = 1.09$) compared to likeability ($M = 3.99, SD = 1.06$), $t(92) = 4.77, p < .001, d = .50$, 95% CI [.28, .71]. Images were also rated higher on morality ($M = 4.49, SD = 1.17$) compared to likeability, $t(92) = 5.10, p < .001, d = .53$, 95% CI [.31, .74]. Ratings of power and morality did not differ, $t(92) = 1.70, p = .092, d = .18$, 95% CI [-.023, .38].

Table 3

Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 x Trait x Participant Gender in Phase 2 mixed-design analysis of variance on trait ratings in Experiment 2.

Effect	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	η_p^2
Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 (C)	116.08	(1,91)	< .001	.56
Trait (T)	58.22	(2,182)	< .001	.15
Participant Gender in Phase 2 (P)	0.73	(1,91)	.396	.01
C x T	149.41	(2,182)	< .001	.62
C x P	0.17	(1,91)	.68	< .01
T x P	1.80	(2,182)	.17	.02
C x P x T	1.18	(2,182)	.311	.01

Note. Statistically significant results are shown in bold.

Importantly, the predicted Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 x Trait 2-way interaction was significant, $F(2, 182) = 149.41, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .62$. We decomposed this 2-way interaction by examining each trait separately. The effect of Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 on likeability ratings was significant, $F(1, 92) = 334.25, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .79$, with confronters ($M = 2.34, SD = 1.11$) rated as less likeable than nonconfronters ($M = 5.65, SD = 1.60$). The effect of Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 on ratings of power was also significant, $F(1, 92) = 38.54, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .30$, with confronters ($M = 5.25, SD = 1.37$) rated as more powerful than nonconfronters ($M = 4.18, SD = 1.37$). The effect of Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 on morality ratings was also significant, $F(1, 92) = 43.75, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .32$, with confronters ($M = 3.85, SD = 1.51$) rated as less moral than nonconfronters ($M = 5.13, SD = 1.48$).

The results of Experiment 2 replicated the findings of Experiment 1 such that women who were more likely to confront sexism were rated as less likeable and more powerful than women who were less likely to confront. Furthermore, Experiment 2 extended these findings by demonstrating that despite societal expectations related to confrontation, confronters are perceived as less moral than nonconfronters. Though past research has demonstrated that people indicate that women *should* confront sexism, a judgement closely tied to moral beliefs (Skitka, 2010; Vaccarino & Kawakami, 2021) and moral courage is associated with standing up for one's principles (Miller, 2000; Skitka et al., 2021; Szekeres et al., 2019), confronters of sexism were seen as less, rather than more, moral than their passive counterparts. These findings highlight the disconnect between people's expectations for confrontation and their evaluations of those who confront.

Experiment 3

Experiment 3 extended the findings of the first two experiments by examining mental representations of male witnesses who confront sexism. Male witnesses and female targets who confront instances of sexism tend to elicit distinct perceptions, with male witnesses often not incurring the same negative social consequences (Czopp et al., 2006; Vaccarino & Kawakami, 2021). Using a reverse correlation paradigm, Experiment 3 examined mental representations of male witnesses who confront or do not confront sexism and their associated trait perceptions. In Phase 1, men and women participants generated CIs of male witness confronters and nonconfronters. In Phase 2, separate men and women participants rated these images on traits relating to likeability, power, morality, masculinity, and age.

Methods

Phase 1: Image Generation

Participants and Design. We recruited 213 students from an undergraduate research participant pool who received course credit for their participation. The data from 21 students were removed for not completing the experiment, and the data from 1 student were removed for failing the attention check (see Methods in Experiment 1 Phase 1), leaving a sample of 191 (97 women, 94 men) participants to generate the CIs. Participants were randomly assigned to generate an image of a man who confronts or does not confront sexism.

Procedure. The current experiment used the same procedure as in Experiment 1. However, in order to examine perceptions of a man who confronts or does not confront sexism, the base image was a White male face (a grayscale image) taken from the Karolinska Face Database (Lundqvist et al., 1998). Across conditions, participants were told to imagine the following situation: *“Two men and a woman are having a conversation. One of the men says something sexist to the woman and the other man responds.”* In the Confronter condition,

participants were asked to “Choose the face that looks *more* like someone who would confront the person making the sexist comment.” In the Nonconfronter condition, participants were asked to “Choose the face that looks *less* like someone who would confront the person making the sexist comment.” The four CIs of a confronter and a nonconfronter generated by men and women participants were created using the same method described in Experiment 1 (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Classification Images from Phase 1 Experiment 3



Confronter generated by women

Confronter generated by men



Nonconfronter generated by women

Nonconfronter generated by men

Phase 2: Classification Image Ratings

Participants and Design. We recruited a new sample of 207 participants who were naïve to the objectives in Phase 1 from an undergraduate research pool who received course credit for their participation. Data from 3 participants were removed for not completing the study, leaving a sample of 204 students (104 women, 100 men) in a 2 Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 (Confronter vs. Nonconfronter) x 2 Gender of Image Generator in Phase 1 (Woman vs. Man) x 4 Trait (Likeability vs. Power vs. Morality vs. Masculinity) x 2 Participant Gender in Phase 2 (Woman vs. Man) mixed design, with only Participant Gender in Phase 2 as a between-subjects factor. A sensitivity analysis using G*Power (Faul et al., 2007) found that our final sample could detect an effect of $\eta_p^2 = .01$ for the predicted 2-way Confront Condition in Phase 1 x Trait interaction (power = .80, $\alpha = .05$, r among repeated measures = .23, observed effect: $\eta_p^2 = .52$).

Procedure. In Phase 2, participants were presented with each of the four CIs created in Phase 1 (i.e., confronter generated by women, confronter generated by men, nonconfronter generated by women, nonconfronter generated by men) and were instructed to rate each image on a series of 11 traits on 9-point scales ranging from 1 (not at all) to 9 (extremely). These traits were related to the three main constructs of likeability (i.e., likeability, warmth, happiness), power (i.e., power, dominance, leadership), morality (i.e., moral, ethical, honourable), and masculinity (i.e., masculinity, femininity). Participants also estimated the age of the person, using an open-ended format. Participants were presented with one image at a time and after completing all 12 ratings, they were presented with the next CI until all ratings were completed for all 4 images. The order of the images and traits were randomized across participants.

In accordance with Experiments 1 and 2, we averaged scores on individual trait ratings to create measures of likeability (confronter generated by men $\alpha = .85$, confronter generated by

women $\alpha = .86$, nonconfronter generated by men $\alpha = .75$, nonconfronter generated by women $\alpha = .82$), power (confronter generated by men $\alpha = .82$, confronter generated by women $\alpha = .72$, nonconfronter generated by men $\alpha = .76$, nonconfronter generated by women $\alpha = .81$), morality (confronter generated by men $\alpha = .85$, confronter generated by women $\alpha = .87$, nonconfronter generated by men $\alpha = .83$, nonconfronter generated by women $\alpha = .83$), and masculinity (confronter generated by men $r = .32$, confronter generated by women $r = .33$, nonconfronter generated by men $r = .40$, nonconfronter generated by women $r = .40$).

Results and Discussion

We conducted a 2 Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 (Confronter vs. Nonconfronter) x 2 Gender of Image Generator in Phase 1 (Woman vs. Man) x 4 Trait (Likeability vs. Power vs. Morality vs. Masculinity) x 2 Participant Gender in Phase 2 (Woman vs. Man) mixed ANOVA on trait ratings with only the last factor between-subjects (see Table 4). Results revealed a main effect of Confrontation Condition in Phase 1, $F(1, 202) = 273.41, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .58$, with confronters ($M = 5.40, SD = .87$) rated higher than nonconfronters ($M = 4.37, SD = .88$). The main effect of Gender of Image Generator in Phase 1 was also significant, $F(1, 202) = 20.96, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .09$, with images generated by men ($M = 4.99, SD = .82$) rated higher than images generated by women ($M = 4.78, SD = .82$). A main effect of Trait was also found, $F(3, 606) = 440.22, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .69$. Simple effects analyses demonstrated that images were rated higher on masculinity ($M = 6.58, SD = .97$) than on likeability ($M = 4.05, SD = .98$), $t(203) = 25.74, p < .001, d = 1.80, 95\% \text{ CI } [1.58, 2.02]$, power ($M = 4.56, SD = 1.03$), $t(203) = 24.36, p < .001, d = 1.71, 95\% \text{ CI } [1.49, 1.92]$, and morality ($M = 4.34, SD = 1.07$), $t(203) = 22.52, p < .001, d = 1.58, 95\% \text{ CI } [1.37, 1.78]$. Images were also rated higher on power compared to likeability, $t(203) = 7.95, p < .001, d = .56, 95\% \text{ CI } [.41, .71]$, and morality, $t(203) = 3.60, p < .001, d = .25$,

95% CI [.11, .39]. Finally, images were rated higher on morality compared to likeability, $t(203) = 7.41, p < .001, d = .52, 95\% \text{ CI } [.37, .66]$.

Table 4

Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 x Gender of Image Generator in Phase 1 x Trait x Participant Gender in Phase 2 mixed-design analysis of variance on trait ratings in Experiment 3.

Effect	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	η_p^2
Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 (C)	273.41	(1, 202)	< .001	.58
Gender of Image Generator in Phase 1 (G)	20.96	(1, 202)	< .001	.09
Trait (T)	440.22	(3, 606)	< .001	.69
Participant Gender in Phase 2 (P)	0.67	(1, 202)	.414	< .01
C x G	8.92	(1, 202)	.003	.042
C x T	219.61	(3, 606)	< .001	.52
C x P	1.31	(1, 202)	.254	< .01
G x T	15.84	(3, 606)	< .001	.07
G x P	0.74	(1, 202)	.391	< .01
T x P	0.69	(3, 606)	.56	< .01
C x G x T	57.11	(3, 606)	< .001	.22
C x G x P	.181	(1, 202)	.671	< .01
C x T x P	1.04	(3, 606)	.376	< .01
G x T x P	1.27	(3, 606)	.284	.01
C x G x T x P	0.51	(3, 606)	.677	< .01

Note. Statistically significant results are shown in bold.

The 2-way Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 x Generator of Image Generator in Phase 1 interaction, $F(1, 202) = 8.92, p = .003, \eta_p^2 = .04$, as well as the 2-way Generator of Image Generator in Phase 1 x Trait interaction, $F(3, 606) = 15.84, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .07$ were significant. Importantly, the predicted 2-way Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 x Trait interaction was also significant, $F(3, 606) = 219.61, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .52$. Notably, these 2-way interactions were qualified by a significant 3-way Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 x Trait x Gender of Image Generator in Phase 2 interaction, $F(3, 606) = 57.11, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .22$. We decomposed this interaction by examining each trait separately. The 2-way Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 x Gender of Image Generator interaction on likeability was significant, $F(1, 203) = 41.58, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .17$. Simple effect analyses revealed that for images generated by women, confronters ($M = 5.79, SD = 1.68$) were rated as more likeable than nonconfronters ($M = 2.38, SD = 1.27$), $t(203) = 24.09, p < .001, d = 1.69, 95\% CI [1.47, 1.90]$. Likewise, for images generated by men, confronters ($M = 5.26, SD = 1.56$) were rated as more likeable than nonconfronters ($M = 2.81, SD = 1.27$), $t(203) = 18.85, p < .001, d = 1.32, 95\% CI [1.13, 1.51]$. Although participants rated images generated by both women and men who confront as more likeable than nonconfronters, this effect was larger for images generated by women ($M_{diff} = 3.41, SD = 2.02$), than images generated by men ($M_{diff} = 2.41, SD = 1.82$), $t(203) = 6.45, p < .001, d = .45, 95\% CI [.31, .56]$.

For ratings of power, the 2-way Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 x Gender of Image Generator in Phase 1 interaction was also significant, $F(1, 203) = 41.58, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .170$. Simple effect analyses revealed that for images generated by men, confronters ($M = 5.20, SD = 1.50$) were perceived as more powerful than nonconfronters ($M = 4.39, SD = 1.66$), $t(203) = 6.06, p < .001, d = .42, 95\% CI [.28, .57]$. However there was no difference between ratings of

power of confronters ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 1.31$) and nonconfronters ($M = 4.44$, $SD = 1.84$), $t(203) = 1.31$, $p = .096$, $d = .09$, 95% CI [-.23, .05] for images generated by women.

The 2-way Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 x Gender of Image Generator in Phase 1 interaction on morality was not significant, $F(1, 203) = 2.98$, $p = .086$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$. Participants rated images generated by both women and men who confront ($M = 5.04$, $SD = 1.25$) as more moral than nonconfronters ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 1.32$), $F(1, 203) = 192.01$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .49$.

The 2-way Confront Condition in Phase 1 x Gender of Image Generator in Phase 1 interaction on masculinity was significant, $F(1, 203) = 103.06$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .26$. Simple effect analyses revealed that for images generated by women, men who confront ($M = 5.75$, $SD = 1.53$) were perceived as less masculine than nonconfronters ($M = 6.94$, $SD = 1.53$), $t(203) = 8.94$, $p < .001$, $d = .63$, 95% CI [-.78, -.48]. In contrast, for images generated by men, men who confront ($M = 6.93$, $SD = 1.36$) were perceived as more masculine than nonconfronters ($M = 6.71$, $SD = 1.57$), $t(203) = 1.67$, $p = .048$, $d = .12$, 95% CI [-.02, .26].

We also conducted a 2 Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 (Confronter vs. Nonconfronter) x 2 Gender of Image Generator in Phase 1 (Woman vs. Man) x 2 Participant Gender in Phase 2 (Woman vs. Man) mixed ANOVA on age estimates of the person depicted in the CIs, with only Participant Gender in Phase 2 as a between-subjects factor (see Table 5)¹⁰. The main effect of Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 was significant, $F(1, 200) = 559.03$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .73$, with confronters ($M = 26.07$, $SD = .38$) rated as younger than nonconfronters ($M = 40.42$, $SD = 5.35$). The main effect of Gender of Image Generator in Phase 1 was also significant, $F(1, 200) = 140.81$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .41$, with images generated by men ($M = 30.59$, $SD = 7.30$) rated as younger than images generated by women ($M = 35.82$, $SD = 7.23$).

¹⁰ A datapoint from one participant was removed, due to a possible typographical error (age estimate = 322).

Furthermore, the 2-way Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 x Gender of Image Generator in Phase 1 interaction on age estimates was significant, $F(1, 200) = 274.95, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .58$. Simple effect analyses revealed that for images generated by women, confronters ($M = 24.37, SD = 6.26$) were estimated as younger than nonconfronters ($M = 47.27, SD = 11.64$), $t(202) = 27.82, p < .001, d = 1.95, 95\% \text{ CI } [-2.19, -1.72]$. Likewise for images generated by men, confronters ($M = 27.63, SD = 6.36$) were perceived as younger than nonconfronters ($M = 33.54, SD = 11.14$), $t(202) = 7.83, p < .001, d = .55, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.70, -.40]$. Although participants rated images generated by both women and men who confront as younger than nonconfronters, this effect was larger for images generated by women ($M_{diff} = 22.80, SD = 11.66$), compared to images generated by men ($M_{diff} = 5.94, SD = 10.78$), $t(201) = 16.63, p < .001, d = 1.17, 95\% \text{ CI } [.99, 1.35]$.

Table 5

Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 x Gender of Image Generator in Phase 1 x Participant Gender in Phase 2 mixed-design analysis of variance on age estimates in Experiment 3.

Effect	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	η_p^2
Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 (C)	559.03	(1, 200)	< .001	.74
Gender of Image Generator in Phase 1 (G)	140.81	(1, 200)	< .001	.41
Participant Gender in Phase 2 (P)	0.64	(1, 200)	.423	< .01
C x G	274.95	(1, 200)	< .001	.58
C x P	0.63	(1, 200)	.428	< .01
G x P	0.91	(1, 200)	.342	.01
C x G x P	< 0.01	(1, 200)	.993	< .01

Note. Statistically significant results are shown in bold.

Experiment 3 examined perceptions of men who confront sexism. Notably, the mental representations and evaluations of men who confront differed dramatically from women confronters in Experiments 1 and 2. In particular, participants' mental representations of male witnesses who confront sexism, compared to nonconfronters, were perceived as being more likeable (especially for images generated by women), more powerful (for images generated by men), more moral, less masculine (for images generated by women), more masculine (for images generated by men), and younger (especially for images generated by women).

While past research finds that men who confront sexism are less likely to encounter backlash as a result of their confrontation and are liked more than when they remain passive (Drury & Kaiser, 2014; Vaccarino & Kawakami, 2021), the current work replicates and extends this pattern using a novel paradigm, and several distinct traits related to power, masculinity, morality, and age. The present findings are encouraging for theories related to allyship, since men who confront sexism not only support women, but are perceived more positively rather than negatively in a number of ways (Ball & Branscombe, 2019; Hekman et al., 2017).

Experiment 4

While confrontation can promote increased self-confidence, self-esteem, and foster a sense of empowerment for women confronters (Gervais et al., 2010), the present findings related to mental representations focus on perceptions of others as confronters. Given these evaluations of female targets who confront, and that the bulk of past research focuses on how women confronters are perceived negatively by others (Mallett & Monteith, 2019; Vaccarino & Kawakami, 2021), we wanted to explore how women view *themselves* in the context of confronting a sexist comment. In Phase 1, women participants generated CIs of themselves as

confronters and nonconfronters of sexism. In Phase 2, separate men and women participants rated these images on traits relating to likeability, power, morality, masculinity, and age.

An additional goal of the present experiment was to examine perceptions of female target confronters using participant-level CIs. Although group-level average CIs, as used in Experiments 1-3, are useful since they reduce the number of faces rated by participants, avoid potential fatigue, and allow for greater power within a limited sample size, recent research has found that using group-level average faces may be related to inflated Type I error rates (Cone et al., 2020). To address this issue, we created individual participant-level (rather than group-level) averaged faces as CIs in Experiment 4, to ensure that our results from Experiments 1-3 can replicate with an alternative method (Cone et al., 2020; Ratner et al., 2014).

Methods

Phase 1: Image Generation

Participants and Design. We recruited 143 women participants from an undergraduate research participant pool who received course credit for their participation. The data from 3 students were removed for not completing the experiment, and the data from 1 student were removed for failing the attention check rule (see Methods in Experiment 1 Phase 1), leaving a remaining sample of 139 women participants to generate the CIs. Participants were randomly assigned to condition in a Confrontation Condition (Confronter vs. Nonconfronter) between-subjects design.

Procedure. The current experiment included the same forced-choice reverse correlation paradigm, procedure, and base face used in Experiment 1. Participants in the Confronter condition were told to imagine the following situation: *“You are having a conversation with a man. He says something sexist. When this type of thing occurs, you typically confront the*

person.” In contrast, those in the Nonconfronter condition were told to imagine the following situation: “*You are having a conversation with a man. He says something sexist. When this type of thing occurs, you typically do not confront the person.*” Participants were then asked to “Choose the face that looks more like you if you were [*or were not*] someone who would confront the person making the sexist comment.”

Within each Confrontation condition, an average face for each participant was created, representing each participants’ image of themselves as a confronter or a nonconfronter. In particular, trial responses were recorded, and the noise patterns associated with each of the selected stimuli were averaged using the ‘rcicr’ package in R (Dotsch, 2017). This participant-specific pixel average was then once again superimposed on the base image, resulting in an image that best exemplified participants’ internal representation of Confronters and Nonconfronters (individual-level CIs). This method yielded 138 CIs: 67 nonconfronter images and 71 confronter images.

Phase 2: Classification Image Ratings

Participants and Design. A new sample of 108 participants was recruited from Prolific Academic and were compensated approximately \$3.25 USD. The data from 5 participants who did not complete the study were removed. The final sample was 103 participants (53 women, 50 men) in a 2 Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 (Confronter vs. Nonconfronter) x 4 Trait (Likeability vs. Power vs. Morality vs. Masculinity) x 2 Participant Gender in Phase 2 (Woman vs. Man) mixed ANOVA on trait ratings with only Participant Gender as a between-subjects factor. A sensitivity analysis using G*Power (Faul et al., 2007) found that our final sample could detect an effect of $\eta_p^2 = .02$ for the predicted 2-way Confront Condition in Phase 1 x Trait interaction (power = .80, $\alpha = .05$, r among repeated measures = .38, observed effect: $\eta_p^2 = .18$).

Procedure. To avoid participant fatigue, participants were presented with 69 randomly selected images from the 139 participant-level CIs created in Phase 1 (evenly distributed across confronter and nonconfronter faces). Participants rated each image on how likeable, dominant, moral, and masculine the depicted person was on 9-point scales ranging from 1 (not at all) to 9 (extremely). Participants also estimated the age of the person in the image using an open-ended format. Although the number of traits were reduced in this experiment to compensate for the increased number of images, they were related to the same conceptual constructs. The order of images and the order of traits were all individually randomized across participant trials.

Results and Discussion

A 2 Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 (Confronter vs. Nonconfronter) x 4 Trait (Likeability vs. Power vs. Morality vs. Masculinity) x 2 Participant Gender in Phase 2 (Woman vs. Man) mixed ANOVA on trait ratings with only Participant Gender in Phase 2 as a between-subjects factor was conducted (see Table 6). The main effect of Trait was significant, $F(3, 303) = 30.44, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .23$. Simple effects analyses indicated that actors were rated higher on morality ($M = 4.77, SD = .67$) than on likeability ($M = 4.57, SD = .81$), $t(102) = 4.85, p < .001, d = .48, 95\% CI [.27, .68]$, power ($M = 4.57, SD = .91$), $t(102) = 2.38, p = .02, d = .24, 95\% CI [.04, .43]$, and masculinity ($M = 3.90, SD = .83$), $t(102) = 8.11, p < .001, d = .80, 95\% CI [.58, 1.02]$. Participants also rated actors higher on likeability compared to masculinity, $t(102) = 5.53, p < .001, d = .54, 95\% CI [.34, .75]$, and higher on power compared to masculinity, $t(102) = 5.86, p < .001, d = .58, 95\% CI [.37, .79]$. Finally, there was no difference in actor ratings between likeability and power, $t(102) = .07, p = .943, d = .01, 95\% CI [-.19, .20]$.

Table 6

Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 x Trait x Participant Gender in Phase 2 mixed-design analysis of variance on trait ratings in Experiment 4.

Effect	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	η_p^2
Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 (C)	0.38	(1, 101)	.538	< .01
Trait (T)	30.43	(3, 303)	< .001	.23
Participant Gender in Phase 2 (P)	2.53	(1, 101)	.108	.025
C x T	21.54	(3, 303)	< .001	.18
C x P	0.29	(1, 101)	.589	< .01
T x P	0.19	(3, 303)	.902	< .01
C x P x T	1.17	(3, 303)	.323	.01

Note. Statistically significant results are shown in bold.

Importantly, the predicted 2-way Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 x Trait interaction was significant, $F(3, 101) = 21.54, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .18$. We decomposed this 2-way interaction by examining each trait separately. The effect of Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 on likeability ratings was significant, $F(1, 102) = 28.34, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .22$, with participants rating themselves as confronters ($M = 4.44, SD = .80$) as less likeable than as nonconfronters ($M = 4.70, SD = .89$). Notably, there was no difference in ratings of power between confronters ($M = 4.59, SD = .96$) and nonconfronters ($M = 4.55, SD = .94$), $F(1, 102) = .83, p = .363, \eta_p^2 = .01$. The effect of Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 on morality ratings was significant, $F(1, 102) = 6.92, p = .010, \eta_p^2 = .06$, with participants rating themselves as confronters ($M = 4.70, SD = .74$) as less moral than as nonconfronters ($M = 4.83, SD = .70$). The effect of Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 on masculinity was also significant, $F(1, 102) = 14.83, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .13$, with

participants rating themselves as confronters ($M = 4.03$, $SD = .83$) as more masculine than as nonconfronters ($M = 3.78$, $SD = .96$).

We also conducted a 2 Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 (Confronter vs. Nonconfronter) x 2 Participant Gender in Phase 2 (Woman vs. Man) mixed ANOVA on age with only Participant Gender in Phase 2 as a between-subjects factor (see Table 7). Results demonstrated a main effect of Confrontation Condition in Phase 1, $F(1, 101) = 120.57$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .54$. with participants estimating their age as confronters ($M = 35.14$, $SD = 4.51$) as older than their age as nonconfronters ($M = 31.31$, $SD = 5.47$).

Table 7

Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 x Participant Gender in Phase 2 mixed-design analysis of variance on age estimates in Experiment 4.

Effect	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	η_p^2
Confrontation Condition in Phase 1 (C)	120.57	(1, 101)	< .001	.54
Participant Gender in Phase 2 (P)	0.18	(1, 101)	.674	< .01
C x P	2.41	(1, 101)	.124	.02

Note. Statistically significant results are shown in bold.

Experiment 4 examined women's mental representations of themselves as confronters or nonconfronters of sexism. In particular, as in Experiments 1 and 2, participants evaluated women's mental representations of themselves as a confronter vs. nonconfronter as less likeable, less moral, more masculine, and older. Importantly, the faces were related to participant-level CIs rather than group-level CIs, demonstrating that our pattern of results replicates in a paradigm designed to reduce the likelihood of Type I error (Cone et al., 2020). Considering that research in

self-enhancement emphasizes how people are motivated to perceive themselves positively and as above average, it is particularly striking that when picturing themselves confronting a perpetrator of a sexist comment, women imagine someone who appears less likeable and less moral (Alicke & Govorun, 2005; Festinger, 1954; Zell et al., 2020).

These findings are notable since, to our knowledge, this is the first study to investigate how women view themselves as confronters of sexism. Despite the fact that participants across both conditions were creating mental images of themselves, these images elicited markedly different evaluations, including on traits that should be objective, such as age. It is notable that even though one's own age should be a fixed number, picturing oneself as someone who confronts versus someone who does not confront sexism, results in a self-image that appears older to independent raters. It is possible that this tendency to view oneself as older when confronting could be related to findings that women tend to become more assertive as they age (Foner, 1988; Onyeizugbo, 2003).

Research demonstrates that people (inaccurately) believe that they would confront gender bias if they had the opportunity, suggesting that most people might identify themselves as a confronter (Brinkman et al., 2011). Given these beliefs, it is noteworthy that in the present research asking participants to imagine themselves as a confronter evokes images associated with negative traits.

General Discussion

Confronting sexism both as a target and a witness is associated with a host of important and positive outcomes (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2008; Czopp et al., 2006; Mallett & Wagner, 2011; Rattan & Dweck, 2018). However, social costs associated with confronting sexism present a significant challenge to confrontation and a potential explanation for the discrepancy between

intentions to confront and actual confrontation (Kaiser & Miller, 2001; Kawakami et al., 2019). In fact, we rarely see confrontation in response to bias (Dickter & Newton, 2013; Swim & Hyers, 1999). This discrepancy is interesting since in theory, most people support confrontation and believe that they as well as others would and should confront sexism (Brinkman et al., 2011; Crosby & Wilson, 2015; Vaccarino & Kawakami, 2021). The present research uses reverse correlation methodology in the context of confrontation to illustrate that we hold distinct perceptions of people who stand up to sexism, and that these perceptions are embedded in the mental images we hold of targets, witnesses, and the self. By exploring visual representations of the faces of confronters using a reverse correlation paradigm, the present work was able to extend past findings by demonstrating that these images are strongly associated with specific attributes.

Experiment 1 revealed that the mental image people hold of a female target who confronts is less likeable, but more powerful, more masculine, and older, compared to a female target who does not confront sexism. In Experiment 2, we replicated these effects related to likeability and power, and additionally demonstrated that female targets who confront are perceived as less moral than nonconfronters. Notably, Experiment 4 extended these findings by investigating a self-perspective on confrontation. The results revealed that when imagining themselves as a confronter, the mental representations women created were less likeable and moral, but more masculine and older than when imagining themselves as a nonconfronter. These findings suggest that except for perceptions of power, self-images of women who confront were strikingly similar to women in general. Thus, women confronting tend to judge themselves with the same critical lens used to judge other women.

Experiment 3 examined perceptions of male witnesses who confront sexism, which were in stark contrast to perceptions of female target confronters in Experiments 1, 2, and 4. In particular, male witnesses who confronted were seen as more likeable, more moral, and younger than nonconfronters. We also found notable differences between the images generated by men and women. Images of a male witness confronter created by women participants were rated as particularly likeable and young, and less masculine than nonconfronters. Conversely, men participants generated images of a man who confronts that was more powerful and masculine than a nonconfronter. These results highlight an interesting difference between what women and men might look for in an ally – for women, this may be someone who seems closer to their ingroup, who is approachable and non-threatening. In contrast, men might conceptualize a man who confronts as a more stereotypical strong, masculine “hero” type.

Relatedly, research conducted by Estevan-Reina et al. (2021) found that women felt greater empowerment and well-being after egalitarian versus paternalistic confrontation to sexism from men. Specifically, when men confronted with an egalitarian approach (i.e., “Hey! What’s up? That comment is sexist. I don’t think that it’s fair to treat women like that. Men should fight against gender inequality.”) compared to a paternalistic approach (i.e., “Hey! What’s up? That comment is rude. I don’t think that it’s appropriate to treat women like that. Men should take care of and protect women.”) women felt more empowered, happier, and less angry. Notably, feminist identification predicts men’s confrontation to sexism via egalitarian motivation, whereas benevolent sexism predicts confrontation via paternalistic motivations (Estevan-Reina et al., 2020). This work highlights that although men’s confrontation to sexism can be beneficial, it is important that it is aimed at promoting gender equity rather than being rooted in benevolently sexist ideals which could undermine women’s sense of empowerment and

well-being. Furthermore, in this work, men confronting sexism for egalitarian (versus paternalistic) reasons were more likely to be perceived as allies by women. This tendency for women to identify and feel empowered by men who confront with an egalitarian versus paternalistic approach may help explain the present gender findings. In particular, in the present work, women imagine a male ally who is highly likeable but not particularly powerful, masculine, or old, rather than the more paternalistic, masculine, and powerful image generated by men. In order for allyship to be both identifiable and beneficial to the female target, men may want to consider which traits are valued by women when they confront, which the present work indicates might differ from their own assumptions. To be an effective ally, it may be important to fit the prototype of what the target group (i.e., women) in the situation expects and desires.

Notably, recent research finds that while confronters hoped that their confrontation would induce perpetrators to change their attitude and educate themselves, perpetrators who had been confronted tended to react defensively, which was associated with poorer emotional outcomes for the confronter (Good et al., 2022). These findings speak to the contextual nature of how confrontation is perceived and suggest a need to not only understand how to encourage confrontation, but also to ensure that it is a positive experience for the confronter and an effective intervention for the perpetrator. Furthermore, the different ways we confront bias can influence confronter backlash as well as the effectiveness of the confrontation at educating the perpetrator (Martinez et al., 2017; Woodzicka & Good, 2021). Importantly, recent research has identified and developed a tool to measure prejudice confrontation styles and demonstrated that these different ways of confronting can distinctly impact outcomes for both the perpetrator and confronter (Chaney & Sanchez, 2022). Better understanding how we can confront in a way that is effective at educating the perpetrator is an important endeavour both for prejudice reduction

outcomes, as well as alleviating the negative outcomes associated with confrontation (Good et al., 2022).

Taken together, the current research demonstrated that we have distinct mental representations of people who stand up to bias and their associated traits. A productive avenue for future research is to examine the downstream consequences of these representations. For example, recent research using reverse correlation revealed that victims of sexual harassment tend to be mentally represented as prototypical women (i.e., those who have feminine features, interests, and characteristics) and when victims were nonprototypical women, there were consequences. In particular, when victims were nonprototypical compared to prototypical, people were less able to identify sexual harassment, sexual harassment claims were considered less credible, and sexual harassment itself was considered to be less harmful (Goh et al., 2022). These findings suggest that the visual stereotypes we hold of social categories like confronters have ripple effects and can impact important attitudinal outcomes with tangible consequences. Holding mental images of female target confronters as unlikeable or immoral, as indicated in the present findings, could thus negatively impact how people feel about confrontation behaviours more generally and these negative perceptions about those who admonish sexism could in turn feed into sexist attitudes and narratives. In future work, we plan to examine what these downstream consequences might look like, and how these mental representations might impact how people feel about both confrontation in response to sexism and sexism more broadly. Specifically, we are interested in exploring how telling people that the classification images depict confronters and nonconfronters would affect their attitudinal responses to sexism and confrontation (i.e., support for anti-sexist policies and confrontation). Such research would

provide insight on the direct impact our mental images of confronters and nonconfronters can have on gender bias progress and would contribute to informing future interventions.

Research using intervention strategies indicates that confrontation behaviour can spread among peers to encourage confrontation behaviour (Becker et al., 2014; Paluck, 2011). An intervention study conducted with high school students demonstrated that training people to confront intergroup prejudice was effective at encouraging confrontation and the behaviour of these trained confronters spread to close others (Paluck, 2011). These findings suggest that confrontation behaviour can be learned. Thus, going forward, future research should aim to examine how we can train people to engage in confrontation behaviour so that confronting can become more commonplace, and we can reap its many benefits. The current work points to perceptions of confronters as a potential opportunity for intervention as well, since it would be important to alter negative perceptions of confronters and harness positive perceptions, in order to further facilitate confrontation.

The present findings importantly demonstrate how confronters of varying identities (i.e., female targets, male witnesses, and the self as a female target) are distinctly evaluated. Because confrontation from both female targets and male witnesses bring about unique benefits, it is important to improve perceptions of women confronters, while also encouraging allies to confront (Dickter et al., 2012; Drury & Kaiser, 2014; Gervais et al., 2010; Gulker et al., 2013). Notably, while our findings and past work suggest that male witness confronters are indeed perceived positively and female targets who confront tend to be liked less than nonconfronters, we also find that there are positive and mixed consequences to confronting for female targets (Drury & Kaiser, 2014; Vaccarino & Kawakami, 2021). In particular, a female target who confronts is perceived to be more powerful, older, and masculine than her passive counterpart. In

future work we plan to examine whether these perceptions of power related to women confronters may provide further benefits to behavioural outcomes, such as being nominated to lead a group.

Another fruitful line of future research is to investigate how confronters of other types of prejudice such as racism and xenophobia are perceived using a reverse correlation paradigm. For instance, research finds that racism, compared to sexism, is perceived as more offensive and worthy of confrontation, and confronters of sexism were liked less than those of racism (Woodzicka et al., 2015). It would thus be interesting if these more favourable perceptions of confronters of racial prejudice might extend to people's visual stereotypes. Developing a better understanding of our visual stereotypes of confronters and nonconfronters across different forms of prejudice, as well as varying identities, can help us develop a more complete picture of the obstacles preventing confrontation, as well as the opportunities afforded by these perceptions.

Conclusion

Past work has illustrated that confronters of sexism, especially female targets, are met with backlash and viewed negatively, compared to those who remain passive (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Vaccarino & Kawakami, 2021). The current work notably extends these findings by demonstrating that perceptions of female target confronters and male witness confronters can be detected with an implicit, perceptual method. We further extend past work by demonstrating that perceptions of confronters can also be positive on a variety of traits including the domain of power.

Taken together, the present package demonstrates that the mental representations we hold of female targets who confront sexism were viewed as less likeable and moral, but more powerful, masculine, and older than those who do not confront. Notably, these findings (with the

exception of power) replicated even when women were imagining themselves as the confronter. In contrast, we find that mental representations of male witnesses who confront were seen as more likeable, more moral, and younger than those who do not confront. Using a reverse correlation paradigm, we demonstrated that the prejudices we hold of those who confront sexism can manifest in how we visualize confronters' and nonconfronters' faces.

These findings highlight the challenges and opportunities associated with standing up to prejudice. While female targets who confront may be perceived more negatively in terms of morality and likeability, they are viewed as more powerful. For male allies, they are viewed as more likeable and moral when confronting. By uncovering our perceptions of confronters across these differing identities, we can identify who people view as prototypical confronters, across targets and allies alike. Moreover, we can also identify areas in which we can work to improve perceptions of confronters, to help minimize backlash and encourage confrontation. By shedding light on possible strategies to harness and improve perceptions of confronters, we can work towards facilitating and encouraging confrontation in an effort to ultimately curb gender bias.

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Speaking Out Against Sexism: Confronters as Leaders

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Abstract

Confronters of bias are often met with negative social consequences. However, there are also benefits to confronting, particularly in the domain of leadership and power. In two experiments, using an online chat paradigm in which participants witnessed a sexist comment from an alleged participant, we examined how confronting or passive responses to this comment would affect perceptions of leadership, competence, and likeability. Across experiments, we found that a female target of sexism who confronts the perpetrator is more likely to be selected as leader of a group task compared to a female target who remains passive, as well as the perpetrator himself. Participants were also more supportive of confrontation from the target who had confronted, compared to the target who remained passive. Moreover, the confronting female target was seen as more competent than the passive female target and perpetrator, and more likeable than the passive female target (uniquely in Experiment 2) and the perpetrator. The implications of these findings for confronting bias and leadership are discussed.

Speaking Out Against Sexism: Confronters as Leaders

When faced with sexist behaviour, women have a choice to make: stand up to the perpetrator and confront or remain silent. Despite intentions to confront prejudice, research finds that the latter option is the much more common choice (Brinkman et al., 2011; Karmali et al., 2017; Kawakami et al., 2009; Mallett & Monteith, 2019). One reason why targets of prejudice may remain silent is the backlash and social costs associated with confrontation (Kaiser & Miller, 2001; Kawakami et al., 2019; Shelton & Stewart, 2004). In the context of sexism, this body of work has demonstrated that indeed, women who confront are perceived negatively and seen to be overreacting, overly sensitive, a complainer, or rude (Becker et al., 2011; Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Eliezer & Major, 2012; Gervais & Hillard, 2014). Despite these consequences, it is important to note that there are important benefits to confrontation. Confronting bias can foster a more inclusive climate, produce positive subsequent interactions, enhance workplace belongingness, and reduce the likelihood of future prejudice and discrimination (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2008; Czopp et al., 2006; Mallett & Wagner, 2011; Rattan & Dweck, 2018). When sexism is not confronted, an increased tolerance for sexual harassment and decreased support for survivors can develop (Mallett et al., 2019).

Importantly, the benefits of confrontation extend to the confronter themselves. Women who fail to confront sexism are perceived by others to be harming the reputation of other women and they themselves can experience negative emotions such as guilt (Becker & Barreto, 2014; Shelton et al., 2006). Confronting sexism, alternatively, can produce an increased sense of competence, self-esteem, and empowerment for women who confront (Gervais et al., 2010). Although perceptions of confronters are often negative, this is not always the case. For example, Dodd et al. (2001) found that women who confronted were respected more by women

participants than women who did not confront. Recent research also suggests that women who confront sexism can impact norms relating to confronting, negatively affect perceptions of the perpetrator, and increase support for confrontation in general (Vaccarino & Kawakami, 2021). Finally, research using a reverse correlation paradigm indicated that mental representations of women who were more versus less likely to confront sexism, appeared more powerful, masculine, and older, albeit less likeable (Vaccarino et al., in preparation). The current research sought to further examine the benefits of confronting sexism, particularly in the domain of leadership.

Leadership and Gender

Leadership dynamics and gender are closely connected, and leadership roles are disproportionately occupied by men (Begeny et al., 2021). People have more difficulty encoding leadership behaviour when it is enacted by a woman compared to a man and tend to be more uncertain about women's, compared to men's, ability to be an effective leader (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Scott & Brown, 2006). Moreover, leaders are often ascribed agentic traits, which are more closely associated with men than women (Eagly et al., 2020; Koenig et al., 2011). Notably, while leadership and power are traits often associated with men, such traits also apply to confrontation. Possibly because the act of confrontation is agentic, it is associated with more male-stereotypic traits (Ashburn-Nardo & Karim, 2019). Statements uttered by powerful people tend to be salient, including in situations of prejudice, those with an increased sense of power tend to punish transgressors more harshly, and those in positions of power tend to be given the responsibility of confronting prejudice (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2020; Barreto et al., 2010; Taylor & Fiske, 1978; Wiltermuth & Flynn, 2013). Furthermore, when primed with power, people are more likely to confront prejudice (Alt et al., 2022). A primary goal of the present research was to examine

whether a woman who confronts sexism is more likely to be nominated as a leader than a passive female target or perpetrator of sexism (Kaiser & Miller, 2001; Vaccarino & Kawakami, 2021; Vaccarino et al., in preparation).

Although one indicator of power is perceived leadership, another form of power is to have an impact on the cognitions and behaviours of others (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2008; Vaccarino & Kawakami, 2021). In the context of bias, people look to others to determine whether to confront, (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2008). In the present research, we examined how support for confrontation as a response to bias can shift in accordance with a target's behaviour (i.e., whether they confront or not). Since confrontation in response to bias is rare, descriptive norms, which are norms that guide our behaviours based on how most people would typically act in a given situation, may indicate that the appropriate response is to remain passive (Brinkman et al., 2011; Cialdini et al., 1990; Kaiser & Miller, 2001; Kawakami et al., 2019; Mallett & Monteith, 2019). Movements like #MeToo, however, demonstrate how descriptive norms can be harnessed by highlighting the ubiquity of a behaviour to create a ripple effect (Zacharek et al., 2017). Accordingly, we expected a female target who confronted compared to a female target who remained passive to elicit stronger support for confrontation.

Attributions of Competence and Likeability

According to the stereotype content model, competence and warmth are the primary dimensions by which we categorize and perceive others (Fiske et al., 2002, 2007). As such, our research investigated perceptions of trait attributions to confronters in terms of traits that relate to competence and warmth. In particular, competence is related to power and status (Fiske et al., 2002). Recent research demonstrates that women who confront can set situational norms and mental representations of confronting women are rated as more powerful, masculine, and older

than nonconfronters (Vaccarino et al., in preparation). As such, in the current research, we expected women who confront sexism to be evaluated as more competent than both women who do not confront and the perpetrator of sexism. In addition to competence, we included ratings of dominance (Experiment 1) since those high in dominance tend to be perceived as more competent (Anderson & Kilduff, 2009), and ratings of capability (Experiment 2) which is closely related to competence (Nagarajan & Prabhu, 2015).

Given that warmth and likeability are also important dimensions in person perception (Fiske et al., 2002, 2007), we investigated the impact of confrontation on this construct. Notably, past research demonstrates that female targets who confront tend to be evaluated as less likeable than those who do not confront (Dickter et al., 2012; Gulker et al., 2013; Vaccarino & Kawakami, 2021; Vaccarino et al., in preparation). Recent studies, however, suggest that confronter backlash is affected by context, with negative perceptions associated with confronting reduced in more professional contexts (e.g., an office) compared to social contexts (e.g., a gym; Vaccarino & Kawakami, 2021). In the present research, we explored whether a confronting female target of sexism would be perceived as less likeable than a passive female target within this leadership-relevant context. We further expected that the confronting female target would be perceived as more likeable than the perpetrator of sexism. In addition to ratings of warmth and likeability (Experiments 1 and 2), which are common stereotypes of women (Eagly & Mladinic, 1989; Fiske et al., 2002), we also included ratings of trustworthiness (Experiment 1), a trait closely related to likeability and warmth (Fiske et al., 2007).

Current Research

Notably, the bulk of past research examining perceptions of confrontation has used scenario studies, in which participants are tasked with imagining themselves in a hypothetical

situation (e.g., Kaiser & Miller, 2001; Vaccarino & Kawakami, 2021). Participants' hypothetical expectations relating to confronting prejudice may often misalign with actual behaviours or judgements. Specifically, although people expect themselves to confront and support confrontation in theory, they tend to remain passive in reality (Crosby & Wilson, 2015; Karmali et al., 2017; Kawakami et al., 2009, 2019; Shelton & Stewart, 2004; Swim & Hyers, 1999; Vaccarino & Kawakami, 2021). The present research extends past literature by investigating confrontation in an ostensible interpersonal interaction in which participants actually witness a sexist comment, in order to evade issues related to mispredictions and affective forecasting. Specifically, across two experiments, participants were ostensibly engaged in a group task and experienced a sexist comment via an online chat to examine the impact of confrontation.

Experiment 1

The primary goal of Experiment 1 was to examine how a woman who confronts, a woman who remains passive, and the perpetrator of the sexist comment were ranked as leader for the group task. We further examined how confronting and passive responses might affect support for confrontation and perceptions of all three actors in terms of competence and likeability.

Methods

Participants and Design

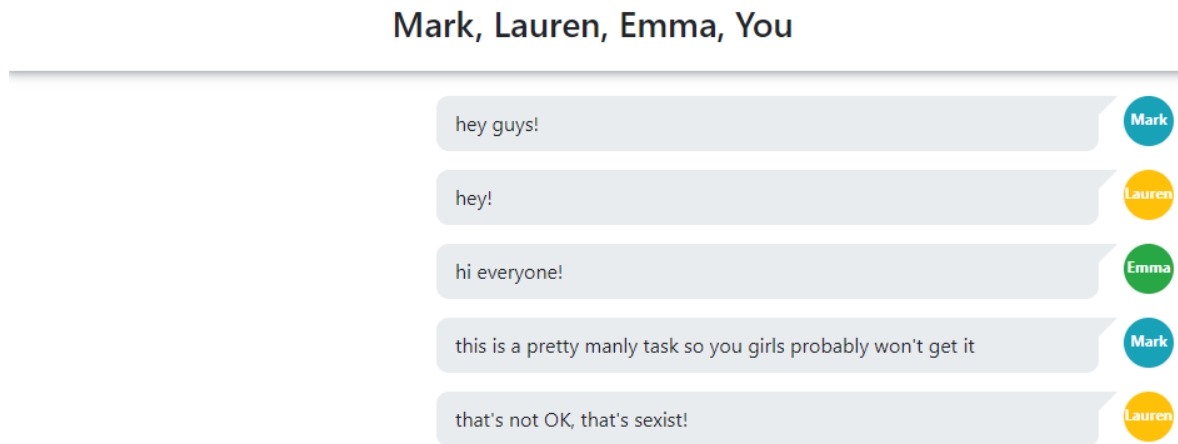
A sample of 117 students was recruited from an undergraduate research pool and received course credit. The data from 28 participants were removed for failing the attention check (further details in the procedure section). The final sample consisted of 89 participants (50 women, 39 men) in a 3 Actor (Confronting Female Target vs. Passive Female Target vs. Perpetrator) x 2 Trait (Competence vs. Likeability) within-subjects design. A sensitivity analysis using G*Power (Faul et al., 2007) found that our final sample could detect an effect of $\eta_p^2 = .02$

for the predicted 2-way Actor x Trait interaction (power = .80, $\alpha = .05$, average correlation among repeated measures = .29, observed effect: $\eta_p^2 = .53$).

Procedure

Upon arrival at the lab, participants were informed that they would be participating in a group study together with three other students who were allegedly in separate cubicles. Participants were presented with instructions for the Winter Survival Task (Johnson & Johnson, 1975). In this task, a hypothetical scenario is described in which participants have crash-landed in thick woods in the winter. They are told that their task will be to select eight items that they think would be most important to their survival in this scenario. Participants were then given one minute to introduce themselves to the other participants via online chat and informed that they would be completing the task together.

In the chat, participants saw that the other three ostensible participants (confederates named Mark, Lauren, and Emma) had already entered the chat and had each said hello (see Figure 1). The male confederate (Mark) then made a sexist comment. Specifically, he wrote: “this is a pretty manly task so you girls probably won’t get it.” Next, Lauren, the confronting female target, responded by saying “that’s not OK that’s sexist!” whereas Emma, the passive female target did not respond.

Figure 1***Screenshot of Chat with Confederates in Experiment 1***

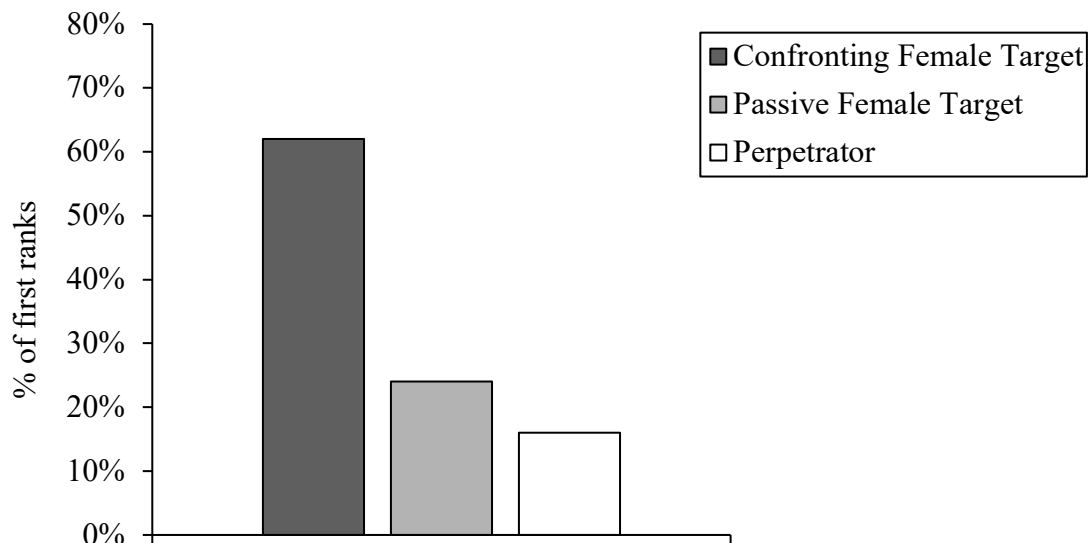
Participants were then asked to rank each of the other three participants from 1 to 3 in terms of who should be the leader of the group task, with 1 being the first choice. Next, participants were told that the researchers were interested in how people form quick first impressions and that they would be rating each of the other participants on a series of traits (likeability, warmth, trust, competence, and dominance), each on separate 9-point scales from 1 (Not at all) to 9 (Extremely). The order of the actors presented for both the leadership ranking and trait ratings were randomized across participants. As a final measure, participants were asked whether the confronting female target and the passive female target, respectively, should have responded to the perpetrator's comment the way that they did (Yes vs. No). For the purposes of analyses, these responses were then coded as support for confrontation (Yes vs. No). For exploratory purposes, we also included open-ended questions asking participants why they chose the leader they did and why they thought the confronting and passive female targets should or should not have confronted.

As attention checks, at the end of the study, participants were asked to report the perpetrator's comment, as well as to describe how each of the female targets responded to the comment. Data from participants who failed these attention checks by not being able to report that a sexist comment took place and/or that the confronting female target responded to the comment, and/or that the passive female target did not respond to the comment, were excluded from analyses. Finally, participants were debriefed and did not actually complete the ostensible group task.

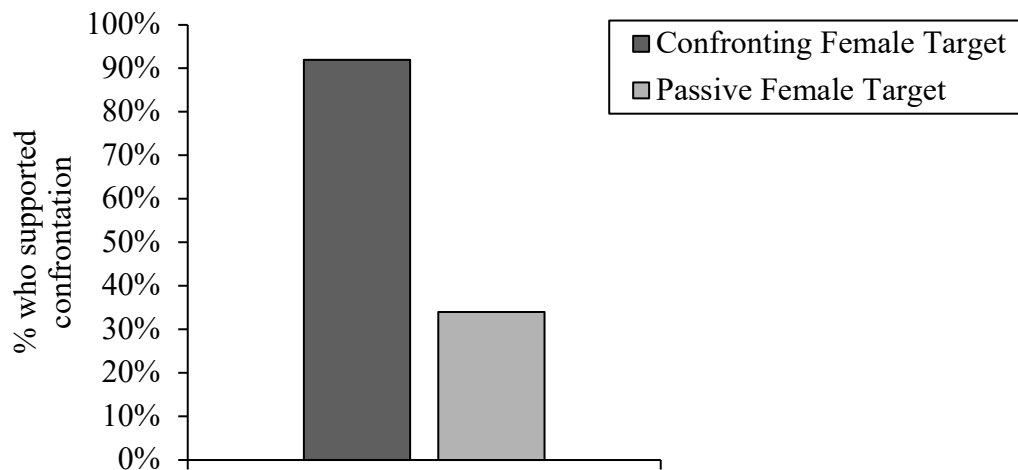
Results and Discussion

Leader Rankings

Though we did not predict participant gender effects, we first explored participant gender as a factor for all analyses. We conducted a 3 Actor (Confronting Female Target vs. Passive Female Target vs. Perpetrator) x 2 Participant Gender (Woman vs. Man) Ordinal Logistic Generalized Linear Analysis on leader rankings. As expected, the 2-way Actor x Participant Gender interaction was not significant, $X^2(2) = 2.78, p = .249$. Thus, we conducted a Friedman's within-subject ANOVA by rank across leader rankings of the 3 Actors (Confronting Female Target, Passive Female Target, and Perpetrator). The results demonstrated that participants significantly differed in their leader rankings of the three actors, $X^2(2) = 50.81, p < .001, W = .29$. Pairwise analyses revealed that the confronting female target ($M = 1.48, SD = .68$) was ranked higher as leader than both the passive female target ($M = 1.94, SD = .65$), $z = -.47, p = .002$, and the perpetrator ($M = 2.53, SD = .76$), $z = -1.06, p < .001$. The passive female target was also ranked higher than the perpetrator, $z = .59, p < .001$. In terms of participants' top choice for leader, 62% of participants selected the confronting female target, 24% of participants selected the passive female target, and 16% of participants selected the perpetrator (see Figure 2).

Figure 2***First Ranked Choices for Group Leader across Actors in Experiment 1******Support for Confrontation***

We conducted a binary logistic regression to examine the effect of Actor (Confronting Female Target vs. Passive Female Target) and Participant Gender (Woman vs. Man) on support for confrontation (Yes vs. No) from the confronting and passive female targets. There was a main effect of Actor, $B(1, N = 89) = -3.88$, $W = 5.41$, $p = .020$, $Exp(B) = .02$. In particular, when asked how each actor should have responded, more participants supported confrontation from the confronting female target (92%) than the passive female target (34%) (see Figure 3). This effect was not qualified by Participant Gender, the 2-way Actor x Participant Gender interaction was not significant, $B(1, N = 89) = 0.38$, $W = .15$, $p = .701$, $Exp(B) = 1.46$.

Figure 3***Support for Confrontation across Confronting and Passive Female Targets in Experiment 1******Trait Ratings***

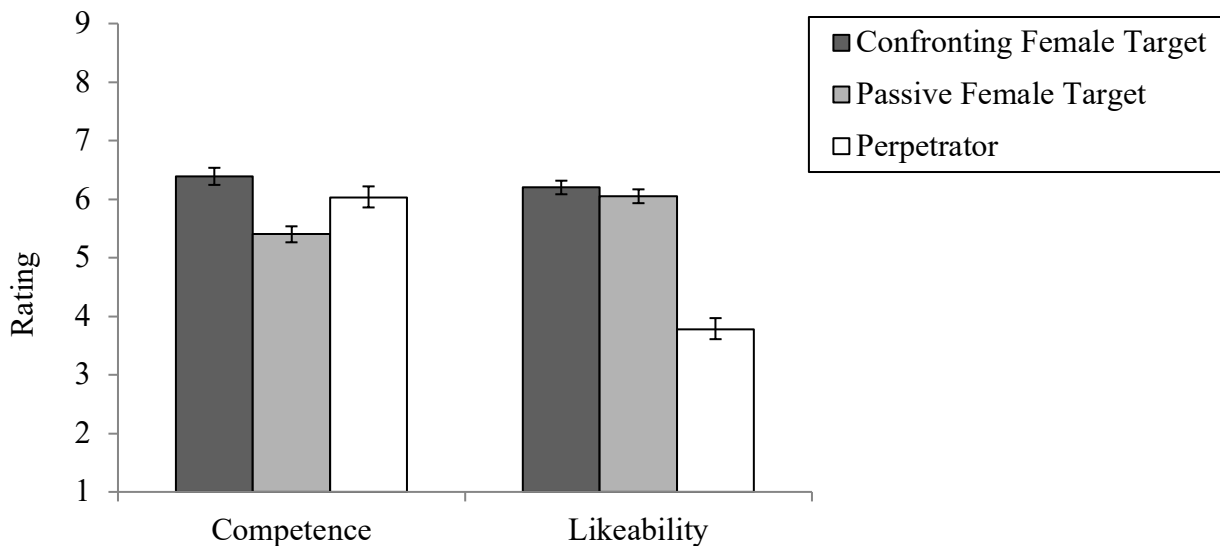
Before analyzing the data, we created an index of competence by taking the mean ratings of competence and dominance for each actor (perpetrator $r = .40$, confronting female target $r = .45$, passive female target $r = .45$). We also created an index of likeability by taking the mean ratings of likeability, warmth, and trustworthiness for each actor (confronting female target $\alpha = .74$; passive female target $\alpha = .81$; perpetrator $\alpha = .83$).

We conducted a 3 Actor (Confronting Female Target vs. Passive Female Target vs. Perpetrator) x 2 Trait (Competence vs. Likeability) x 2 Participant Gender (Woman vs. Man) mixed ANOVA on trait ratings with only Participant Gender as a between-subjects factor. The main effect of participant gender was significant, $F(1, 87) = 6.30, p = .014, \eta_p^2 = .07$, with women participants giving higher ratings ($M = 5.84, SD = .86$), compared to men ($M = 5.38, SD = .86$). The main effect of Actor was significant, $F(2, 174) = 40.59, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .32$. Simple effect analyses indicated that the confronting female target ($M = 6.29, SD = 1.05$) was rated

higher than both the passive female target ($M = 5.72$, $SD = 1.03$), $t(88) = 5.23$, $p < .001$, $d = .55$, 95% CI [.33, .78], and the perpetrator ($M = 4.91$, $SD = 1.49$), $t(88) = 5.03$, $p < .001$, $d = .85$, 95% CI [.61, 1.09]. The passive female target was also rated higher than the perpetrator, $t(88) = 5.03$, $p < .001$, $d = .53$, 95% CI [.31, .75]. The main effect of Trait was also significant, $F(1, 87) = 43.95$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .34$, with actors rated higher on competence ($M = 5.92$, $SD = 1.10$) compared to likeability ($M = 5.34$, $SD = .84$).

Importantly the predicted Actor x Trait 2-way interaction was significant, $F(2, 174) = 96.62$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .53$. This effect was not qualified by participant gender, the 3-way Actor x Trait x Participant Gender interaction was not significant, $F(2, 174) = 0.67$, $p = .512$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$. To decompose the 2-way interaction we examined each trait separately. The effect of Actor on competence ratings was significant, $F(2, 176) = 14.32$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .14$. Specifically, the confronting female target ($M = 6.39$, $SD = 1.38$) was rated as more competent than both the passive female target ($M = 5.40$, $SD = 1.29$), $t(88) = 6.85$, $p < .001$, $d = .73$, 95% CI [.49, .96], and the perpetrator ($M = 6.03$, $SD = 1.78$), $t(88) = 1.73$, $p = .043$, $d = .18$, 95% CI [-.03, .39]. The perpetrator was rated as more competent than the passive female target, $t(88) = 3.08$, $p = .001$, $d = .33$, 95% CI [.11, .54].

The effect of Actor on likeability ratings was also significant, $F(2, 176) = 111.54$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .56$. In particular, the confronting female target ($M = 6.20$, $SD = 1.09$) was rated as more likeable than the perpetrator ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 1.61$), $t(88) = 11.51$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.22$, 95% CI [.94, 1.49]. The passive female target ($M = 6.05$, $SD = 1.11$) was also rated as more likeable than the perpetrator, $t(88) = 11.53$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.22$, 95% CI [.95, 1.50]. There was no difference in likeability ratings between the confronting and passive female targets, $t(88) = 1.19$, $p = .120$, $d = .13$, 95% CI [-.08, .33] (see Figure 4).

Figure 4***Trait Ratings Across Actors in Experiment 1***

The results of Experiment 1 demonstrated that when a sexist comment is made by a perpetrator, people are most likely to nominate a woman who confronted him as the group leader, compared to both a woman who remained passive or the perpetrator himself. In terms of support for confrontation, more participants thought the confronting female target should indeed have confronted compared to the passive female target. Finally, a woman who confronted the perpetrator of sexism was seen as more competent than both the perpetrator and the passive target, and more likeable than the perpetrator.

Experiment 2

The goal of Experiment 2 was to replicate and extend the findings from Experiment 1. First, we collected a larger sample in order to increase the power and reliability of our results and to further examine the impact of participant gender. While Experiment 1 and our past research has not found notable differences across participant gender (Vaccarino & Kawakami, 2021), some research has indicated gender differences in evaluations confronters of sexism.

Specifically, Dodd et al. (2001) found that although women liked and respected a woman more when she confronted versus did not confront sexism, men liked the woman less when she confronted versus when she did not confront, and their ratings of respect for the woman were not affected by her confrontation. Due to the interactive nature of the present research, the women participants could also be considered targets of sexism, thus we felt it particularly pertinent to ensure that participant gender effects did not account for our results.

In Experiment 2, we also selected a new alleged group task. Because the Winter Survival Task used in Experiment 1 (Johnson & Johnson, 1975) may be considered more stereotypically masculine, we created a new gender-neutral task in the present experiment. Specifically, we created a Treasure Hunt Task which involved a scavenger hunt around New York City, rather than a task centred on survival skills. We also changed the names of the confronting female target and the perpetrator and created a new sexist comment and confrontation response to ensure that results of Experiment 1 were not specific to a particular sexist comment and confrontation (Chaney & Sanchez, 2022; Dickter et al., 2012; Dickter & Newton, 2013; Martinez et al., 2017; Woodzicka et al., 2015; Woodzicka & Good, 2021). Finally, we also made changes to the trait ratings we examined to focus more specifically on our two traits of interest: competence and likeability.

Methods

Participants and Design

A sample of 206 students was recruited from an undergraduate research pool and received course credit. The data were removed from 42 participants for failing the attention check (further details in the procedure section), 3 participants for receiving low RA ratings (e.g., for not following instructions), and 2 participants because of computer errors. The final sample

included 159 participants (85 women, 74 men) in a 3 Actor (Confronting Female Target vs. Passive Female Target vs. Perpetrator) x 2 Trait (Competence vs. Likeability) within-subjects design. A sensitivity analysis using G*Power (Faul et al., 2007) found that our final sample could detect an effect of $\eta_p^2 = .01$ for the predicted 2-way Actor x Trait interaction (power = .80, $\alpha = .05$, average correlation among repeated measures = .34, observed effect: $\eta_p^2 = .34$).

Procedure

As in Experiment 1, upon arrival in the lab, participants were informed that they would be participating in a group task with three other participants who were ostensibly in separate cubicles. Instead of the Winter Survival Task used in Experiment 1, participants were presented with The Treasure Hunt Task in which these students had been chosen to participate in an annual treasure hunt in New York City. In this scenario, their luggage had been lost and they were given a voucher with which they could purchase items of their choice. Their task would be to select eight items that they deemed most important to have on the treasure hunt. Next, participants were told they would have one minute in a chat with the other participants, where they would be able to introduce themselves and briefly interact with them prior to completing the task together. However, the experimenter noted that it had been a busy day in the lab, and they were running behind schedule, so there was likely less than a minute left to chat.

Indeed, to ensure that participants did not grow suspicious about the lack of response from other members of the chat, there were only 17 seconds left on the timer when participants entered the chat. After these 17 seconds had elapsed, participants were still able to see the chat content for the remainder of the minute (43 seconds), but they could no longer respond. They therefore had a full minute to read what was said in the chat. On the chat screen, participants could see the names of the other three participants (Josh, Vanessa, and Emma), and that all three

had already said hello. Critically, participants could also see a sexist comment sent by the male confederate (Josh): “this is probably too complicated for you females.” Vanessa, the confronting female target who was shown to be typing when the participant entered the chat, responded by asking: “Whats that supposed to mean?? thats messed up.” Emma, the passive female target did not respond.

Participants were then told that prior to starting the Treasure Hunt Task, all group members would be asked to select a leader for the group task since this is shown to facilitate group projects. They were also told they would be answering a few other questions related to first impressions of the other group members, so that the experimenter could gather more information about the group. Participants were then asked to rank each of the other three participants on their choice for group leader, with 1 being the highest rank and 3 the lowest. Then, participants rated each of the other participants on a series of traits (likeability, warmth, competence, and capability) on 9-point scales from 1 (Not at all) to 9 (Extremely). The order of the actors presented for both the leadership ranking and trait ratings were randomized across participants. Participants completed the same measure of support for confrontation, exploratory open-ended questions, and attention checks used in Experiment 1. Finally, participants were debriefed and did not actually complete the ostensible group task.

Results and Discussion

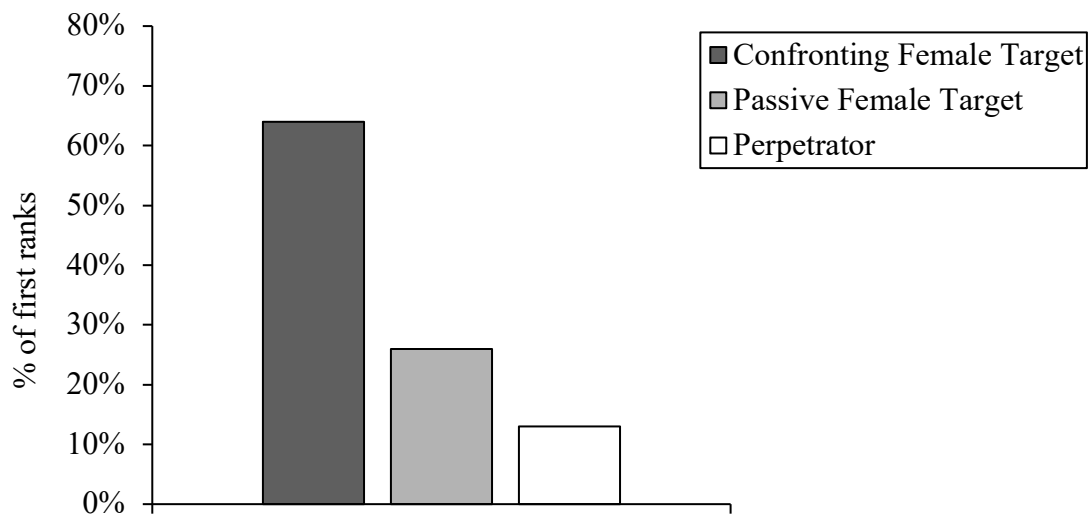
Leader Rankings

We conducted a 3 Actor (Confronting Female Target vs. Passive Female Target vs. Perpetrator) x 2 Participant Gender (Woman vs. Man) Ordinal Logistic Generalized Linear Analysis on leader rankings. The 2-way Actor x Participant Gender interaction was not significant, $X^2(2) = 1.20, p = .548$. Thus, we conducted a Friedman’s within-subject ANOVA by

rank across leader rankings of the 3 Actors (Confronting Female Target, Passive Female Target, and Perpetrator). The results demonstrated that participants significantly differed in their leader rankings of the three actors, $\chi^2(2) = 131.41, p < .001, W = .41$. In particular, pairwise analyses revealed that the confronting female target ($M = 1.43, SD = .63$) was ranked higher as leader than both the passive female target ($M = 1.84, SD = .58, z = -.40, p = .002$), and the perpetrator, ($M = 2.69, SD = .68, z = -1.25, p < .001$). The passive female target was also ranked higher than the perpetrator, $z = .85, p < .001$. In terms of participants' top choice for leader, 64% of participants selected the confronting female target, 26% of participants selected the passive female target, and 13% of participants selected the perpetrator (see Figure 5).

Figure 5

First Ranked Choices for Group Leader across Actors in Experiment 2



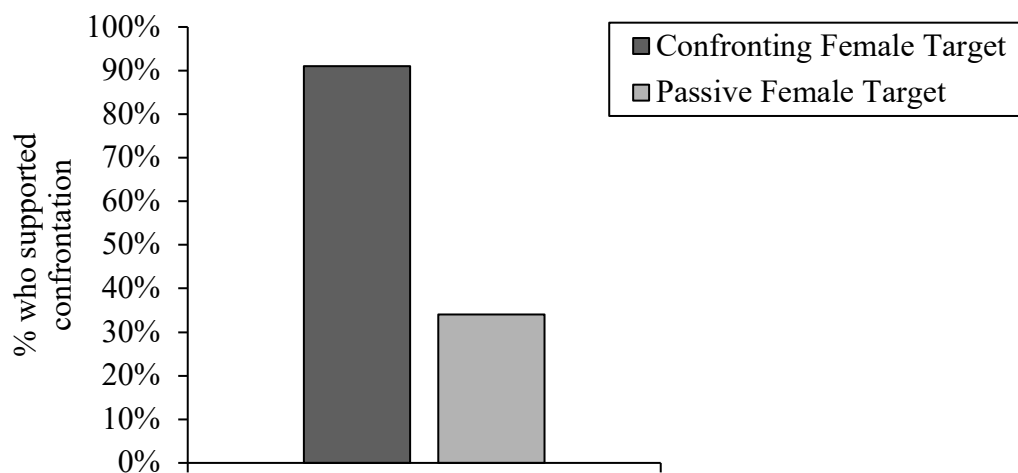
Support for Confrontation

We conducted a binary logistic regression to examine the effect of Actor (Confronting Female Target vs. Passive Female Target) and Participant Gender (Woman vs. Man) on support

for confrontation (Yes vs. No) from the confronting and passive female targets. There was a main effect of Actor, $B(1, N=159) = -4.21, W=14.23, p < .001, Exp(B) = .02$. In particular, when asked how each actor should have responded, more participants supported confrontation from the confronting female target (91%) than the passive female target (34%) (see Figure 6). This effect was not qualified by Participant Gender, the 2-way Actor x Participant Gender interaction was not significant, $B(1, N = 159) = .781, W = 1.35, p = .246, Exp(B) = 2.18$.

Figure 6

Support for Confrontation across Confronting and Passive Female Targets in Experiment 2



Trait Ratings

Before analyzing the trait attributions, we created an index of competence by taking the mean ratings of competence and capability for each actor (confronting female target $r = .71$; perpetrator $r = .77$; passive female target $r = .75$), and an index of likeability by taking the mean ratings of likeability and warmth for each actor (confronting female target $r = .63$; perpetrator $r = .84$; passive female target $r = .66$).

We conducted a 3 Actor (Confronting Female Target vs. Passive Female Target vs. Perpetrator) x 2 Trait (Competence vs. Likeability) x 2 Participant Gender (Woman vs. Man) mixed ANOVA on trait ratings with only Participant Gender as a between-subjects factor. The main effect of Actor was significant, $F(2, 314) = 234.73, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .60$. Simple effect analyses indicated that the confronting female target ($M = 6.54, SD = 1.21$) was rated higher than both the passive female target ($M = 6.21, SD = 1.21$), $t(158) = 4.82, p < .001, d = .38$, 95% CI [.22, .54] and the perpetrator ($M = 3.70, SD = 1.73$), $t(158) = 16.02, p < .001, d = 1.27$, 95% CI [1.06, 1.48]. The passive female target was also rated higher than the perpetrator, $t(158) = 15.13, p < .001, d = 1.20$, 95% CI [1.00, 1.40]. The main effect of Trait was also significant, $F(1, 157) = 32.53, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .17$, with actors rated higher on competence ($M = 5.67, SD = 1.11$) than likeability ($M = 5.29, SD = .92$).

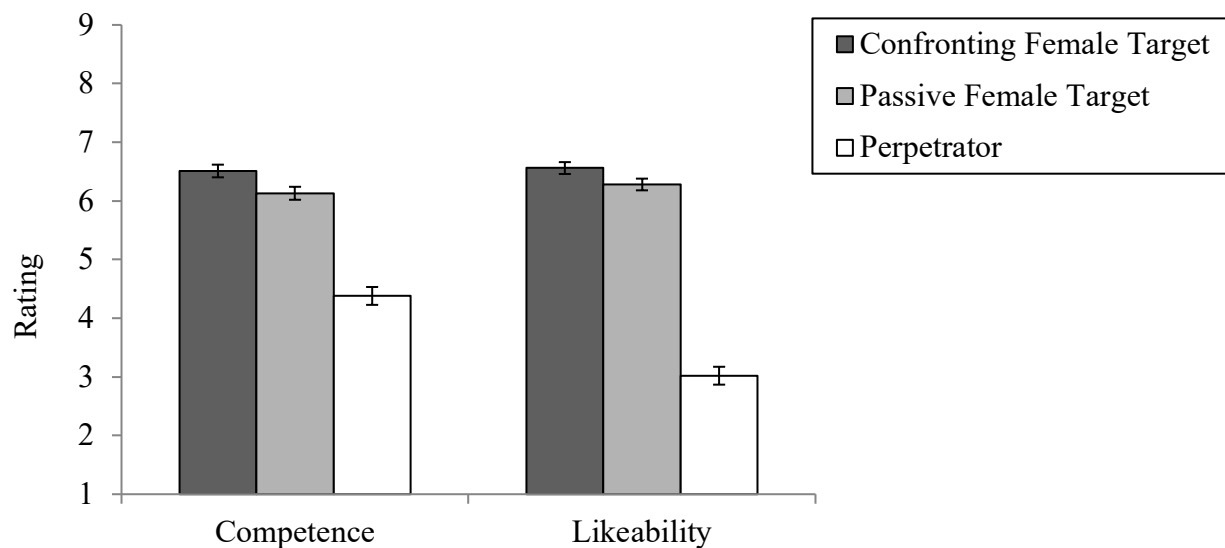
Importantly, the predicted Actor x Trait 2-way interaction was significant, $F(2, 314) = 79.54, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .34$. This effect was not qualified by participant gender, the 3-way Actor x Trait x Participant Gender interaction was not significant, $F(2, 314) = 0.23, p = .794, \eta_p^2 < .01$. To decompose the 2-way interaction, we examined each trait separately. The effect of Actor on competence ratings was significant, $F(2, 316) = 108.62, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .41$. Specifically, the confronting female target ($M = 6.51, SD = 1.36$) was rated as more competent than both the passive female target ($M = 6.13, SD = 1.39$), $t(158) = 5.44, p < .001, d = .43$, 95% CI [.27, .59] and the perpetrator ($M = 4.38, SD = 1.92$), $t(158) = 11.26, p < .001, d = .89$, 95% CI [.71, 1.08]. In contrast to Experiment 1, the passive female target was also rated as more competent than the perpetrator, $t(158) = 10.00, p < .001, d = .79$, 95% CI [.61, .97].

The effect of Actor on likeability ratings was also significant, $F(2, 316) = 283.75, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .64$. In particular, the confronting female target ($M = 6.56, SD = 1.28$) was rated as

more likeable than both the passive female target ($M = 6.28$, $SD = 1.26$), $t(158) = 3.15$, $p < .001$, $d = .25$, 95% CI [.09, .41] and the perpetrator ($M = 3.02$, $SD = 1.92$), $t(158) = 17.99$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.43$, 95% CI [1.20, 1.65]. The passive female target was rated as more likeable than the perpetrator, $t(158) = 17.35$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.38$, 95% CI [1.16, 1.59] (see Figure 7).

Figure 7

Trait Ratings Across Actors in Experiment 2



The results of Experiment 2 replicated the results of Experiment 1 using a novel, non-gendered task, and generalizing results to a different sexist comment and confrontation. Specifically, as in Experiment 1, participants were most likely to nominate a woman who confronted the perpetrator of a sexist comment as leader of a group task, compared to both a woman who remained passive or the perpetrator himself. Also as in Experiment 1, more participants thought that the female target who confronted, should indeed have confronted compared to the female target who remained passive. Notably, Experiment 2 finds that a woman who confronts the perpetrator of a sexist comment is seen as more competent and more likeable

than both the perpetrator and the passive target. Thus, although in Experiment 1 there was no difference in likeability ratings between the confronting female target and passive female targets, in Experiment 2, we actually see a boost in likeability for a woman who confronts.

General Discussion

The current research investigated perceptions of perpetrators of sexist comments and of women who confront and do not confront him. The present findings highlight the benefits of confrontation. Across two experiments, a female target who confronted the perpetrator of a sexist comment was favoured as the group leader compared to both a female target who remained passive and the perpetrator. We also found more support for confrontation for the target who confronted than the target who remained passive. Thus, participants tended to accept and support however a female target chose to respond to confrontation. Across studies, we also found that a confronting female target was judged as more competent than both a passive female target and the perpetrator of the sexist comment. Although confronting female targets were judged as more likeable than the perpetrator in both studies, in Experiment 1 there was no difference in likeability ratings across the passive and confronting female targets. In Experiment 2, however, participants also rated the confronting female target as more likeable than her passive counterpart.

Together, the present findings underline the significant benefits of confrontation as female targets of sexism. Women who confront sexism are perceived as leaders and increase support for confrontation. They are also rated as more competent than women who remain silent in the face of sexism. Furthermore, when confronting in a context where competence is at the forefront, targets of sexism are not seen as less likeable than their passive counterparts, and in fact may be liked more compared to those who remain silent. Although the latter findings are at

odds with past literature that emphasizes confronter backlash, they are consistent with recent research that suggests that negative perceptions of confronters differ across contexts and are minimized in professional settings such as an office (Dickter et al., 2012; Gulker et al., 2013; Vaccarino & Kawakami, 2021).

Contexts are important because different environments are associated with distinct norms (Cialdini et al., 1990; Pronin et al., 2008). With respect to confronting sexism, while work environments have clear policies and expectations for reporting acts of bias and typically explicitly recommend that women respond, norms relating to confronting bias in everyday life are less explicit and formalized (Bates, 2015; Glick, 2014; Graf, 2018). Thus, it is possible that in a context in which students are ostensibly participating in an experiment together in which they are completing a group task, norms highlighting leadership, competence, and professionalism may be more salient than in a more neutral or social context, thereby encouraging and normalizing confrontation. We recommend that future research more specifically explore which aspects of a context make confronters more or less likeable, and how we can harness these norms to make confrontation more widely accepted.

Future research should also seek to examine these effects in a context where the passive target speaks as frequently as the perpetrator and confronting target. In particular, the babble effect demonstrates that individuals who speak more in a group setting tend to emerge as leaders (MacLaren et al., 2020). Thus, the confronting target having more speaking time than the passive target could contribute to her propensity to be chosen as group leader. This effect could also explain why the perpetrator, even after making a sexist comment, was still nominated as leader some of the time (13 - 16% across studies). Importantly, concerns related to the babble effect are mitigated in this work in several ways. Firstly, all three confederates across both studies had

some speaking time, greeting each other at the beginning of the chat. Furthermore, the perpetrator who had more speaking time than the passive female target and an equal amount of speaking time as the confronting female target, was chosen as leader less frequently than both targets, indicating that there are other factors at play in leader nomination decisions in this context. Finally, since confrontation does involve speaking up, the babble effect in this situation can be seen as a further advantage of confrontation: demonstrating yourself as leader by having your voice heard.

Importantly, the current research extends past findings using an interactive immersive situation. Using this method, we were able to examine not only more authentic reactions compared to hypothetical scenarios, but this strategy allowed us to investigate the impact of confrontation on consequential, situational outcomes such as nominating group leaders (Crosby & Wilson, 2015; Karmali et al., 2017; Kawakami et al., 2009, 2019; Shelton & Stewart, 2004; Swim & Hyers, 1999; Vaccarino & Kawakami, 2021). It is striking that by admonishing the behaviour of a sexist perpetrator, a woman is more likely to be elected leader and may determine whether people find sexism appropriate (Koudenburg et al., 2020). Notably, as more women take on leadership roles, the definition of what makes a good leader is slowly shifting to encapsulate women-centric goals and approaches (Eagly, 2020). Moreover, research suggests that it would be beneficial to pay greater attention to the links between gender identity and organizational structures (Ely & Padavic, 2007). The current research suggests that confronting sexism is one method by which women can set themselves apart as a leader, particularly in organizational settings.

In conclusion, recent research finds that although women have become better represented in some professions, gender bias persists and is perpetuated by those who do not perceive or

acknowledge bias (Begeny et al., 2020). By finding ways to encourage confrontation such as highlighting its benefits to the confronter, we can work towards identifying and mitigating biased behaviour. The present findings present new evidence in a leadership-relevant context that confronting sexism as a woman who is a target of sexism provides important benefits such as being perceived as a leader who is more competent and likeable than a woman who stays silent. A confronting woman is also able to encourage norms that support confrontation more generally. These findings should be encouraging to women who would like to confront but are deterred by the potential social costs (Shelton & Stewart, 2004) since it appears that in some professional or competence-related domains, the benefits may outweigh the costs.

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DISSERTATION DISCUSSION

Taken together, this dissertation research demonstrates the dynamic nature by which we perceive those who stand up to sexism across confronter identity and context, and the implications of these perceptions. As highlighted in Paper 1, although the majority of people believe that confrontation, particularly from a female target, is the correct course of action, these expectations are not always reflected in the way we evaluate those who confront. Using methods including explicit evaluations and a reverse correlation paradigm in Papers 1 and 2, we found that a female target who confronts sexism, compared to one who remains passive, is perceived less positively in terms of likeability and morality, even when a woman is imagining herself in the position of the confronter. In contrast, a male witness who stands up to a sexist comment is perceived as more likeable and moral than his passive counterpart.

In line with the stereotype content model, the present dissertation examined traits related to dimensions of warmth, as mentioned above, as well as competence (Fiske et al. 2002, 2007). In particular, Papers 2 and 3 extended past work on perceptions of confronters, examining traits associated with power and competence. Specifically, we found that female targets of sexism who confront (including from a self-perspective) are perceived as more competent, powerful, masculine, and older than nonconfronters. The power of a confronting target does not end there. Specifically, using an interpersonal interaction paradigm, Paper 3 revealed that a female target of sexism who confronted the perpetrator was more likely to be nominated as the leader of a group task compared to a female target who remained passive, and the perpetrator himself. Moreover, our results demonstrated that a woman who confronts can wield her power by setting the norms of the situation. Specifically, Paper 1 demonstrated that confrontation from a female target but not from a male witness could drive down perceptions of the perpetrator of sexism and both

Papers 1 and 3 demonstrated that support for confrontation is enhanced when a target confronts her perpetrator, compared to when she remains passive.

Finally, the present dissertation emphasizes the contextual nuances of confrontation. Paper 1 found that confrontation in response to sexism had less of a negative impact on evaluations of a woman confronter in a professional compared to a social context. Notably, in Paper 3, the context was a more professional setting in which participants were involved in a group task as part of a university research study. Given the relevance of competence and leadership in this domain, and the reduced negative implications of confrontation in professional settings, it is perhaps unsurprising that female targets who confronted were not viewed as less likeable than their passive counterparts. Nonetheless, we recommend further research on the importance of contexts in which confrontation is rewarded versus punished to contribute to our understanding of strategies that encourage these responses down the line (Shelton & Stewart, 2004). More specifically, we advise future studies to explore which aspects of a context make fronters more or less likeable and how we can harness these norms to make confrontation more widely accepted. For instance, it would be useful to examine these questions in other settings and populations, such as in an actual workplace and manipulating the contextual norms by having explicit guidelines related to confronting sexism, versus not. This work could not only help pinpoint which aspects of a professional context can foster positive perceptions of fronters but would be critical in creating interventions that implement features of contexts that are more tolerant of confrontation within other domains.

Benefits of Confrontation Across Identities

Together, the findings presented in this dissertation provide novel and consequential insights in the domain of confronting bias. Although the bulk of past research tends to focus on

the negative repercussions associated with targets who confront prejudice (Becker et al., 2011; Eliezer & Major, 2012; Kaiser & Miller, 2001), recent research highlights the benefits of confrontation, for instance demonstrating that confrontation signals a growth mindset related to prejudice, which in turn suppresses confronter backlash (Rattan et al., 2023). The present findings contribute to the extant literature by demonstrating the dynamic nature of perceptions of those who confront prejudice and by emphasizing that female target confronters are also rewarded for their actions, particularly in domains relating to power, competence, and leadership. Specifically, women who confront sexism are viewed as competent and powerful leaders who are able to impact perceptions of the perpetrator and increase support for future confrontation. Notably, women who spoke up in response to a sexist comment were more likely to be elected as a leader than a woman who did not confront. This particular finding represents a consequential, situational outcome and provides useful insight in a time when women are taking on more leadership roles and the definition of a good leader is slowly shifting to encapsulate women-centric goals and approaches (Eagly, 2020). Confronting intergroup bias thus presents an opportunity for women to signal to others their leadership abilities, particularly in organizational settings.

The present dissertation also speaks to the value of allyship. Past research has demonstrated that when confronting sexism, men are less likely than women to encounter backlash (Drury & Kaiser, 2014). Replicating these findings and extending them into novel trait domains that go beyond likeability, the results of this dissertation demonstrate that despite low expectations for confrontation, men who confront sexism are viewed more favourably, being rated as more likeable, moral, and younger than nonconfronters. Our findings should thus encourage male allies, who seemingly are the recipients of positive but not negative

consequences of confronting, to confront perpetrators of sexism. Nevertheless, it is important to consider the motivations and nature of how and why men confront sexism. Given that women experience positive effects to the self when they confront sexism such as feeling empowered and competent, it is important to ensure that having men confront on their behalf does not unintentionally undermine their agency (Gervais et al., 2010). Importantly, recent research suggests that the way men confront sexism and whether it is rooted in egalitarianism or paternalism can impact the outcomes of the confrontation for women targets (Estevan-Reina et al., 2021). In particular, when men confronted a sexist perpetrator with an egalitarian (versus a paternalistic) approach, women felt more empowered, happier, and less angry. This sense of empowerment experienced by women when egalitarian allies engaged in confrontation was also related to these women's future intentions to confront sexism themselves. Notably in related work, men's endorsement of feminist identification led them to confront sexism through egalitarian motivations, whereas men's endorsement of benevolent sexism led them to confront sexism through paternalistic motivations, and only the feminism-driven confrontation was positively associated with men's intentions to engage in collective action related to gender equality (Estevan-Reina et al., 2020). This work emphasizes that in order to be a true ally to women, men need to consider *why* and *how* they are confronting. Indeed, men who confronted sexism from an egalitarian (versus paternalistic) standpoint were also more likely to be perceived as allies by women (Estevan-Reina et al., 2021). Thus, men who wish to be allies for women should seek to confront sexism with an egalitarian approach that is rooted in feminist ideals in order to bolster rather than undermine women's sense of empowerment and well-being. Findings related to support for confrontation also speak to the importance of norms. When people were exposed to confrontation behaviour, they were more likely to endorse this behaviour

in the future compared to when they were exposed to passive responses. This pattern indicates an opportunity to harness descriptive norms and suggests that the more people see confrontation, the more encouraged they might be to support it and potentially engage in it themselves down the line (Brinkman et al., 2011; Cialdini et al., 1990; Kaiser & Miller, 2001; Kawakami et al., 2019). Norms related to sexism and confrontation are spread subtly and research using intervention strategies indicates that confrontation behaviour can transmit among peers, suggesting that confrontation behaviour can be learned (Becker et al., 2014; Koudenburg et al., 2020; Paluck, 2011). Thus, a potential solution to the current lack of confrontation may be to simply confront and allow this confronting behaviour to proliferate and become normative. Going forward, future research should examine how we can train people to engage in confrontation so that it is more commonplace to reap its many benefits. For example, future interventions could make use of descriptive norms by using messaging that highlights the frequency of confrontation or by training an influential person to saliently confront bias, to encourage others to do the same.

Future Directions

Notably, *how* we confront prejudice can impact confronter backlash and the effectiveness of confrontation (Martinez et al., 2017; Woodzicka & Good, 2021). Recent research has demonstrated that different ways of confronting can distinctly impact outcomes for both the perpetrator and confronter (Chaney & Sanchez, 2022). For instance, research finds that people have more favourable reactions to nonaggressive, calm, or nonthreatening forms of confrontation, compared to more threatening or explicit forms (Becker & Barreto, 2014; Czopp et al., 2006; Martinez et al., 2017). Although the studies presented throughout this dissertation did vary in terms of the confrontation content, it would be useful for future research to measure and manipulate how specific forms of confrontation can affect these outcomes. By directly

comparing different ways of confronting, we can begin to determine optimal forms of confrontation that balance confrontation effectiveness with positive consequences for the confronter. Moreover, it would be useful for future research to include forms of confrontation that are reflective of confrontation styles that would occur in the real world. For instance, in more naturalistic settings, people tend to confront sexism in more subtle ways such as asking the perpetrator to repeat himself, asking a rhetorical question, or other indirect confrontation strategies (e.g., replying to a sexist comment with “it’s interesting that you thought about gender”) (Swim & Hyers, 1999; Woodzicka & Good, 2021). Future work should thus seek to examine more subtle forms of sexism and how these might differentially impact our perceptions of confronters and their associated outcomes. Developing an understanding of how we can confront effectively is an important goal both for prejudice reduction outcomes and for mitigating negative outcomes associated with confrontation (Good et al., 2022).

Ambiguity and uncertainty can play an important role when confronting subtle forms of sexism. Identifying a behaviour as biased is one of the first steps of confrontation. People are reluctant to confront prejudice in general, and this is especially the case when they are uncertain that the behaviour was biased (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2008). For instance, sexist humor can make the perpetrator’s intentions ambiguous, thus making confrontation especially risky and costly (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2008; Mallett et al., 2016). Although the current research focused on nonambiguous situations, wherein sexism was explicit and confrontation was appropriate, future research should examine the role of uncertainty and ambiguity of sexist comments on perceptions of confronters across identity as well as their downstream consequences. Examination of possible interventions that focus on alleviating uncertainty by identifying biased

behaviour as an initial first step to confrontation is also recommended (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2008).

Although the present dissertation examines certain outcomes related to confrontation such as leader nominations and support for confrontation, in general, future research would benefit from examining more downstream consequences of confrontation and perceptions of confronters. Specifically, it would be interesting to investigate how witnessing confrontation or passive responses can differentially affect attitudinal responses to sexism and confrontation (i.e., supporting anti-sexist policies). Research using longitudinal or daily diary methods could also provide valuable insight in determining whether witnessing confrontation can truly shift norms and provide verbal and behavioural support for confrontation down the line.

Another productive avenue for future research would be to investigate perceptions of confronters of other types of prejudice, such as racism and xenophobia. For example, racism tends to be perceived as more offensive and worthy of confrontation compared to sexism (Woodzicka et al., 2015). It would be interesting to directly compare perceptions of confrontation to these varying forms of intergroup bias. In addition, future research would benefit from examining these forms of prejudice from an intersectional standpoint. For example, exploring how gender and race might interact in situations of prejudice (e.g., comparing confrontation to sexism and racism by White and Black women confronters and White and Black men confronters) could yield new and important insights into confrontation research. Developing a more complete picture of how confrontation is received across different forms of bias could shed light on the barriers and opportunities related to confrontation in these specific contexts. Furthermore, taking an intersectional approach has been shown to provide valuable insight in contexts of confrontation to prejudice (Case et al., 2020; Remedios & Akhtar, 2019).

Concluding Remarks

Across three papers and nine experiments, using methods spanning hypothetical scenarios, reverse correlation paradigms, and interpersonal interactions, we investigated how confronting the perpetrator of sexism is associated with a host of trait evaluations, particularly related to likeability, morality, competence, power, masculinity, and age, as well as behavioural outcomes related to establishing norms and being elected as a leader. Together, the findings of this dissertation emphasize the nuanced way by which we perceive those who stand up to sexism and how these perceptions can fluctuate based on who they are and where it occurs. The present dissertation highlights that although confronters may incur costs for their behaviour, their actions are also rewarded, especially within domains where power, competence, and leadership are at the fore. Delving deeper into the dynamic nature of perceptions and outcomes associated with those who confront prejudice can contribute to developing an understanding of how to create climates where we can maximize the benefits and minimize the costs of confronting. This information has the potential to facilitate future confrontation, with the ultimate goal of reducing the occurrence of gender bias.

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