Confronting Sexism as Persuasion: Effects of a Confrontation's Recipient, Source, Message, and Context

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We applied the message-learning theory of persuasion to examine perceptions of leaders who confront sexism. Participants (N = 283) read vignettes that varied the confrontation message (i.e., directness), source (i.e., confronter gender), and context (i.e., public vs. private). As hypothesized, female (vs. male) participants evaluated confronters more positively and female (vs. male) leaders were evaluated less favorably when they confronted publically. Additionally, participants perceived greater sexism for public (vs. private) confrontation contexts and were more surprised when the confrontation source was a male (vs. female) leader. Implications for confronting and persuasion theories and applications for policymakers are discussed.

Unfortunately, women report experiencing one to two incidents of sexism, including sexist jokes, each week (Swim, Hyers, Cohen, & Ferguson, 2001). This everyday sexism has cumulative negative effects on women, including increased anger, depression, and stress as well as decreased self-esteem and performance (Spencer, Steele, & Quinn, 1999; Swim et al., 2001). One way to reduce the negative effects of sexism and reduce its incidence in the future is to confront it. Confronting prejudice occurs when people see bias and respond by letting their distaste for the bias be known to the person or group responsible (Ashburn-Nardo, Blanchar, Petersson, Morris, & Goodwin, 2014; Becker & Barreto, 2014).

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Most women believe that they will confront sexism (Swim & Hyers, 1999), but in actuality women are more likely to privately report a sexist experience than publicly confront it (Stangor, Swim, Van Allen, & Sechrist, 2002). People may not confront sexism because confronters are often viewed unfavorably, including being regarded as overreactors (Czopp, Monteith, & Mark, 2006), complainers (Kaiser & Miller, 2001), impolite, and aggressive (Hyers, 2007; Swim & Hyers, 1999). This lack of confrontation is unfortunate because confronting can have positive outcomes for targets (e.g., increasing feelings of empowerment; Gervais, Hillard, & Vescio, 2010; Hyers, 2007), perpetrators (e.g., increasing positive attitudes and reducing stereotyping; Czopp et al., 2006), and even bystanders (e.g., increasing perceptions that the perpetrator is biased; Blanchard, Crandall, Brigham, & Vaughn, 1994; Rasinski & Czopp, 2010).

We suggest that confronting sexism may not be an all or nothing action. People may confront sexism in a variety of ways in an effort to both (1) increase perceptions that the perpetrator is prejudiced and (2) maintain favorable impressions in the eyes of others. Adopting a persuasion framework (Hillard, 2011; Swim, Gervais, Stangor, & Pearson, 2009), we suggest that features of the confrontation recipient, message, source, and context may powerfully shape the effectiveness of confrontations and impressions of confronters. Because people perceive leaders as more responsible for and effective at confronting prejudice than others (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2014), we focused on perceptions of leaders who confront sexism in this work.

An Integration of Confronting and Persuasion Theories

The message-learning approach to persuasion by the Yale Group (Hovland, Janis, & Kelly, 1953) identifies four categories of variables—recipient, message, source, and context—that influence the learning of persuasive messages (Petty & Wegener, 1998). *Recipient* variables focus on individual differences that influence the likelihood of persuasion, such as need for cognition and issue knowledge. *Messages* that do not clearly intend to persuade and messages that refute counter arguments are more persuasive. More credible and attractive *sources* are more influential. Finally, *context* variables relate to the setting and may include the mode of presentation and audience distraction. We adopted this framework to understand when male and female leaders who confront sexism would be evaluated more or less favorably and when their confrontations would cause more perceptions of sexism.

During confrontations, the perpetrators and observers represent the recipients. Because most research has considered the consequences of confronting prejudice for perpetrators, we examined the consequences for observers (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2014; Rasinski & Czopp, 2010). Thus, the *recipients* were male and female

observers who read a vignette in which the confrontation *message* was direct or indirect, the confrontation *source* was a man or woman, and the confrontation *context* was public or private. We predicted that perceptions of confronters and sexism would vary by the recipient, message, source, and context.

The confrontation recipient. We included male and female participants in our study, allowing us to examine the role of recipient gender on perceptions of confronters and sexism. Because we examined prototypic instances of sexism in which a man directed a gender-biased statement at a woman (Inman & Baron, 1996), we expected that female recipients would regard the confronter more favorably and perceive the statement as more sexist than male recipients.

The confrontation message. When confrontation occurs in less direct ways, confronters may be viewed more favorably. Direct confrontations were conceptualized as openly labeling the act as sexist, whereas indirect confrontations were conceptualized as tentatively labeling the act as problematic but not explicitly sexist. Indirect (vs. direct) confrontations may be viewed as less hostile, allowing the perpetrator to save face. Consistently, less (vs. more) hostile confrontations cause less anger and more favorable evaluations of the confronter (Becker & Barreto, 2014; Czopp et al., 2006; Hyers, 2010). Interestingly, although interpersonal consequences of confronting prejudice are influenced by the hostility of the message, confrontation messages are often effective, regardless hostility; confrontations decrease stereotyping, whether they are hostile or not (Czopp et al., 2006). Reasoning that the effects of hostility and directness of the message would be similar, we explored whether people would perceive the perpetrator as similarly sexist, regardless of directness. We also expected that direct confrontations would cause less positive evaluations of the confronter (similar to Czopp et al., 2006), but we also examined whether the evaluations of indirect confrontations (which may or may not be evaluated negatively) depended on the confrontation source and the confrontation context.

The confrontation source. Men who confront may be viewed more favorably than women who confront sexism. Previous work has shown that when targets (i.e., Blacks and women) confront prejudice, perpetrators experience less guilt than when nontargets (i.e., Whites and men; Czopp & Monteith, 2003) confront. Additionally, target confronters are less persuasive than nontarget confronters (Rasinski & Czopp, 2010). These finding can be explained in terms of the confrontation recipient's and/or observer's perceptions of the self-interest—or lack thereof—motivating confrontation (Drury & Kaiser, 2014). Taking an unexpected position that violates self-interest may cause surprise (Czopp et al., 2006). Thus, observers may be more surprised when a man (vs. a woman)

confronts sexism. In the work from Czopp et al. (2006) it remains unclear whether ingroup/outgroup status plays a role. In the present research, we reasoned that a woman who confronts may be seen as acting with self-interest and conforming to expectations, whereas a man who confronts may be seen as acting without self-interest and violating expectations, which may cause surprise and positive regard.

The confrontation context. Finally, we examined the role of public and private confrontation contexts. We reasoned that public confrontations (i.e., with the perpetrator in the presence of others) have the potential to exert more social influence than private confrontations (i.e., the perpetrator only). A public confrontation may reduce the perpetrator's prejudice but also change observers' prejudice, reestablish egalitarian norms, and demonstrate that the leader is in charge. The effects of a private confrontation, however, are limited to the perpetrator. Thus, public (vs. private) confrontations may cause people to view gender biases as more sexist.

Message, source, and context interactions. Furthermore, we expected confronter source gender to interact with direct (vs. indirect) messages and public (vs. private) contexts. Although direct confrontations may cause uniformly negative evaluations (Hyers, 2010), indirect confrontations may be more neutral, with evaluations of the confronter depending on whether the confronter is a man or a woman and whether he or she confronts in public or private. By definition, confronting prejudice is an agentic action in which confronters attempt to exert influence over others by expressing their aversion for the prejudiced behavior (Kaiser & Miller, 2001). Because agency is associated with masculinity (Heilman, 1985), women cannot simultaneously be good women and good confronters (Eagly, 1987) and when women deviate from their prescribed roles they are evaluated negatively (Rudman & Fairchild, 2004). If public confrontations are related to increased perceptions of agency and masculinity, then they may lead to more positive evaluations for male than female leaders. Consistently, women appear to be aware of the discrepancy between the female gender role and confronting; women with high (vs. low) gender-role consistency goals are less likely to confront prejudice (Hyers, 2007).

Study 1

Our rationale assumes that leaders who confront prejudice publically are perceived as more influential than leaders who confront prejudice privately. Study 1 tested this notion.

Method

Participants and procedure. Undergraduates ($N = 40$, 26 women) from a Midwestern university in the United States participated for course credit. Participants imagined that a male employee made a sexist statement during a staff meeting. They imagined that the manager wished to convey that the statement was inappropriate and unacceptable and must decide to whom to communicate this message. Participants were then presented with illustrations that depicted different groups, including everyone, the perpetrator and managers or the perpetrator and other employees, the perpetrator only, or no one, to which the manager could respond. Participants then rated how likely it was that responding to each group would "stop future sexist events" on a 5-point scale ($1 = extremely\ unlikely$, $5 = extremely\ likely$).

Results and Discussion

A significant one-way repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA), $F(3, 117) = 102.43$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .72$, revealed that the manager was perceived as more likely to stop future sexist events when confronting the perpetrator in the presence of everyone ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 1.08$). In order from the maximum to minimum influence ratings (all significantly different, Fs > 7.08, ps $< .02$), the other conditions were as follows: perpetrator and managers or perpetrator and employees ($M = 3.69$, $SD = 0.76$); perpetrator privately ($M = 3.10$, $SD = 1.15$); and not confronting ($M = 1.08$, $SD = 0.47$). These results support the notion that public (vs. private) confronting is perceived as more influential. Study 2 extended this to examine whether public (vs. private) confronting is actually more influential in increasing perceptions that gender bias is sexist and whether women (vs. men) are regarded less favorably for public confrontations.

Study 2

Participants read a vignette in which a male perpetrator made a gender-biased statement and in which the message, source, and context of the resulting confrontation were manipulated. Participants indicated how surprised they were by the confrontation and evaluated the leader who confronted on competence, charisma, and overall leadership. Finally, participants indicated how sexist the statement was. We expected that female (vs. male) participants would evaluate the confronter more positively and perceive the statement as more sexist (Hypothesis 1). We also expected that participants would evaluate the female (vs. male) leader less favorably for indirect, public confrontations (Hypothesis 2). We expected that participants would report more surprise when a male (vs. female) leader confronted sexism (Hypothesis 3). Finally, because public confrontations were perceived as

most influential in Study 1, we expected participants to regard the statement as more sexist when it was confronted publically (vs. privately, Hypothesis 4).

Method

Participants.   Undergraduates ($N = 283$, 163 women) from a Midwestern university in the United States participated for course credit. Participants were assigned to a 2 (directness: direct or indirect) $\times$ 2 (confronter gender: male or female) $\times$ 2 (context: public or private) $\times$ 2 (participant gender: men or women) between participants design.

Procedure.   Participants were brought into the lab in groups of 10–25 and told that the study examined goals. They provided informed consent, and completed the vignettes and dependent measures.

Vignettes.   Participants described a position they really wanted (e.g., a dream job; a position at a top graduate school, medical school, or law school; or membership on a prestigious team or group) that would give them the opportunity to earn rewards that they value (e.g., money, respect, contact with important people, or opportunities for future positions). They imagined that they were one of five semifinalists being interviewed for the position. They read the following vignette, including the manipulations of directness, confronter gender, and context:

> When you arrive for your interview, imagine that you and the other semi-finalists are greeted by *Mr. [Ms.] Jones*. *Mr. [Ms.] Jones* explains that *he [she]* has been in your position for three years and has been promoted. *He [She]* has been asked to select a finalist who will get this position. More specifically, *he [she]* is in charge of interviewing each semi-finalist and observing each semi-finalist's performance on an important task. In the end, *he [she]* will select the best semi-finalist for the job.

After interviewing you, *Mr. [Ms.]* Jones asks you to perform some tasks that are highly predictive of success in your desired position along with the other semi-finalists. While you are working with the other candidates on the tasks, Kevin, one of the finalists, says that he'd be happy to do the "heavy lifting," so that none of the women have to do it. In response, *Mr. [Ms.]* Jones *publically [privately]* tells Kevin "that last comment you made seemed very sexist. Perhaps the women would also be interested in doing that?" [direct] or "that last comment you made seemed a little unfair. Perhaps the women would also be interested in doing that?" [indirect].

Dependent measures.   Participants evaluated Jones and the situation on nine-point scales ($1 = not at all$, $9 = extremely$). Participants rated how surprising (*surprising* and *unexpected*, $\alpha = .65$) Jones' response was as well as how competent (*competent* and *influential*, $\alpha = .65$) and charismatic (*charismatic* and *motivating*,

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations of Dependent Measures

	Mean (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Surprise	4.66 (1.73)	–	−.38*	−.30*	−.28*	−.22*	−.28*
2. Perceived sexism	5.31 (2.29)		–	.50*	.43*	.40*	.45*
3. Overall positivity	6.46 (1.40)			–	.84*	.89*	.82*
4. Competence	6.75 (1.37)					.62*	.58*
5. Charisma	6.32 (1.62)					–	.61*
6. Leadership	6.36 (1.84)						–

Note. $*p < .001$.

$\alpha = .82$) Jones was. They also rated Jones' leadership ("Overall, Mr. [Ms.] Jones seems like a great leader" and "Overall, I would be very excited to work under Mr. [Ms.] Jones," $\alpha = .86$). We also combined the competence, charismatic, and leadership ratings to create a mean overall positivity score ($\alpha = .84$) for Jones. Participants then indicated how sexist Kevin's comment was perceived ("How sexist was Kevin's comment?") on a nine-point scale (1 = *not at all sexist*, 9 = *extremely sexist*). Finally, participants indicated their gender and were debriefed.

Results

As Table 1 shows, participants were moderately surprised and perceived the perpetrator as somewhat sexist. Participants also perceived confronters favorably, as evidenced by high values on overall positivity, competence, charisma, and leadership. The dependent variables were moderately correlated with one another; surprise was associated negatively with perceptions of sexism, positivity, competence, charisma, and leadership, whereas the other variables were associated positively with each other.

Leader perceptions. Because the leader perception variables were correlated with each other and hypothesized to show a similar pattern of results, they were first submitted to a 2 (directness: direct or indirect) × 2 (confronter gender: male or female) × 2 (context: public or private) × 2 (participant gender: men or women) multivariate analysis of variance. The effect of participant gender was significant, $F(3, 265) = 9.97$, $p < .001$; Wilk's $\Lambda = .90$, $\eta^2 = .10$. The effect of directness was also significant, $F(3, 265) = 4.31$, $p = .005$; Wilk's $\Lambda = .95$, $\eta^2 = .05$. Finally, the directness × confronter gender × context interaction was marginally significant, $F(3, 265) = 2.04$, $p = .108$; Wilk's $\Lambda = .98$, $\eta^2 = .02$. Each variable was then submitted to a separate 2 (directness: direct or indirect) × 2 (confronter gender: male or female) × 2 (context: public or private) × 2 (participant gender: men or women) between participants ANOVA

Table 2. Dependent Measures by Leader Gender, Directness, and Context, Mean (Standard Deviation)

Measure	Context	Direct		Indirect	
		Female leader	Male leader	Female leader	Male leader
Overall positivity	Private	6.10 (1.68)$_a$	6.50 (1.28)$_a$	6.76 (1.15)$_a$	6.65 (1.11)$_a$
	Public	6.30 (1.64)$_a$	6.14 (1.56)$_a$	6.29 (1.38)$_a$	7.00 (1.35)$_b$
Competence	Private	6.54 (1.59)$_a$	6.91 (1.21)$_a$	7.03 (1.24)$_a$	6.67 (1.31)$_a$
	Public	6.61 (1.61)$_a$	6.57 (1.34)$_a$	6.54 (1.50)$_a$	7.19 (1.09)$_b$
Charisma	Private	6.06 (1.71)$_a$	6.27 (1.57)$_a$	6.79 (1.21)$_a$	6.47 (1.50)$_a$
	Public	6.29 (1.78)$_a$	6.09 (1.86)$_a$	6.06 (1.81)$_a$	6.63 (1.39*)$_b$
Leadership	Private	5.71 (2.13)$_a$	6.31 (1.70)$_a$	6.47 (1.61)$_a$	6.81 (1.63)$_a$
	Public	6.00 (1.94)$_a$	5.77 (2.01)$_a$	6.28 (1.65)$_a$	6.19 (1.35)$_b$

Note. Means in adjacent columns within each measure and within directness with different subscripts are significantly different, $p < .05$, $^*p = .14$.

for hypotheses testing. All significant main effects and interactions are reported in the text.

Overall positivity.   The main effect of participant gender was significant, $F(1, 281) = 29.98$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .09$, with women ($M = 6.83$, $SD = 1.33$) perceiving the confronter more positively than men ($M = 5.97$, $SD = 1.36$), consistent with Hypothesis 1. The directness × confronter gender × context interaction was also significant, $F(1, 281) = 5.66$, $p = .018$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$. The interaction was driven by a leader gender effect for indirect public ratings; female confronters were regarded less positively than male confronters, $F(1, 69) = 5.66$, $p = .019$, consistent with Hypothesis 2 (see Table 2). Competence, charisma, and leadership were then considered separately (see Table 2).

Competence.   A significant main effect of participant gender revealed that women ($M = 7.04$, $SD = 1.31$) perceived the confronter as more competent than men ($M = 6.37$, $SD = 1.37$), $F(1, 281) = 18.18$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$, consistent with Hypothesis 1. The hypothesized directness × confronter gender × context interaction, $F(1, 281) = 5.55$, $p = .019$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$, again revealed that the interaction was driven by a confronter gender effect; for indirect public confrontations, female confronters were regarded as less competent than male confronters, $F(1, 69) = 4.28$, $p = .042$, consistent with Hypothesis 2.

Charisma.   A main effect of participant gender revealed that women ($M = 6.69$, $SD = 1.59$) perceived the confronter as more charismatic than men ($M = 5.83$, $SD = 1.54$), $F(1, 281) = 22.75$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$, consistent with

Hypothesis 1. The hypothesized directness × confronter gender × context interaction, $F(1, 281) = 3.89$, $p = .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$, again emerged. A trend of confronter gender emerged for indirect public ratings, $F(1, 69) = 2.23$, $p = .14$, with female confronters regarded as less charismatic than male confronters, consistent with Hypothesis 2. There was also a significant effect of context for female confronters in the indirect condition, $F(1, 68) = 3.99$, $p = .049$, with female leaders who confronted publically regarded as less charismatic than female leaders who confronted privately.

Leadership. A main effect of participant gender revealed that women ($M = 6.75$, $SD = 1.74$) perceived the confronter as a better leader than men ($M = 5.71$, $SD = 1.73$), $F(1, 281) = 25.83$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .09$, consistent with Hypothesis 1. The directness × confronter gender × context interaction was marginal, $F(1, 281) = 3.69$, $p = .056$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$, and again revealed that the interaction was driven by a confronter gender effect. Female confronters were regarded as lower in leadership than male confronters when the confrontation was indirect and public, $F(1, 69) = 6.44$, $p = .013$, consistent with Hypothesis 2.

Surprise. Consistent with Hypothesis 3, a significant main effect of confronter gender revealed that participants were more surprised when a man ($M = 4.93$, $SD = 1.73$) than a woman ($M = 4.37$, $SD = 1.69$), $F(1, 281) = 6.43$, $p = .012$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$, confronted sexism.

Perceived sexism. Finally, a significant main effect of participant gender revealed that women ($M = 5.83$, $SD = 2.22$) perceived the statement as more sexist than men ($M = 4.59$, $SD = 2.20$), $F(1, 281) = 19.51$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$, consistent with Hypothesis 1. A significant main effect of context revealed that the statement was perceived as more sexist when confronted publically ($M = 5.68$, $SD = 2.23$) rather than privately ($M = 4.93$, $SD = 2.29$), $F(1, 281) = 6.71$, $p = .010$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$, consistent with Hypothesis 4. Sexism ratings were also significantly above the mid-point of the scale for public confrontations, $t(1, 281) = 3.70$, $p < .001$, whereas private confrontations were not significantly different from the mid-point, $t < 1$, suggesting that public (vs. private) confrontations were more likely to cause people to regard gender bias as sexist.

Discussion

These studies supported our four hypotheses and provide evidence for the use of persuasion theories to integrate variables that influence outcomes of confronting prejudice (Hillard, 2011; Swim et al., 2009). Supporting Hypothesis 1, women (vs. men) perceived the confronter more favorably and viewed the statement as more sexist (see Study 2). Consistent with our suggested link between persuasion

and confronting, evaluations of the leader who confronted interacted with the message, source, and context of the confrontation, which supported our second hypothesis. Indirect confrontations were expected to depend on confronter gender and confrontation context. Consistent with Hypothesis 2, a woman (vs. man) was regarded as less positive, competent, charismatic, and a worse leader for indirect public confrontations (see Study 2). Participants were more surprised when a man (vs. woman) confronted sexism, consistent with Hypothesis 3 (see Study 2). Finally, extending Study 1 and in support of Hypothesis 4, participants perceived the gender biased statement as more sexist for a public (vs. private) confrontation in Study 2.

Implications

There were several novel features of this work that advance confronting, persuasion, and gender role theories. These studies are the first to examine whether evaluations of confronters and perceptions of prejudice vary by the context. The findings from Study 1 suggest that confronters are perceived as more likely to stop future sexist events when they confront publically (vs. privately). Importantly, the findings from Study 2 suggest that the context not only changes perceptions that a confronter may stop future sexist events, but it also leads to *actual* perceptions of sexism (e.g., greater perceptions of sexism for gender-biased statements). When participants imagined public confrontations, the biased statement was perceived as more sexist than private confrontations. Although the same confrontation may be used, the context in which people confront influences leader evaluations and perceptions of prejudice.

Our research also extends gender role theory (Eagly, 1987) to perceptions of women and men who confront prejudice. When a woman did not conform to her more communal female gender role and confronted in public, she had less favorable evaluations than a man. These same differences did not emerge for private confrontations. Moreover, Study 2 shows that female leaders can be perceived as more charismatic when they act in feminine contexts (e.g., confronting privately vs. publically). Private confrontations may provide women with the opportunity to confront and be appropriate women at the same time. Yet, failing to confront publically may carry costs for women because people may be less likely to perceive gender bias as sexist when the confrontation occurs in private (vs. public). Further, if public confronting is perceived as the best way to demonstrate influence (as in Study 1), then private confronting may undermine perceptions of women's leadership over time. Private confronting did not lead to more positive evaluations for female (vs. male) leaders. At best, it appears that female confronters may be viewed equally positively as male confronters. Finally, although female participants perceived the confronter overall more positively than male participants, participant gender did not interact with the message, source, or context. It

is possible that women generally viewed confronters positively, but due to role violation, still viewed female confronters less positively than male confronters for public confrontations.

These studies also shed light on the effect of targets of prejudice as confronters. Although targets (e.g., Blacks, women) and nontargets (e.g., Whites, men) both decrease stereotyping through confrontation (Czopp et al., 2006), previous research is mixed on the effect of target or nontarget confrontation on other outcomes (Blanchard et al., 1994; Czopp & Monteith, 2003). Our finding that a man's (vs. woman's) confrontation was more surprising replicates Czopp and Monteith's (2003) finding that nontarget (vs. target) confronting is unexpected (Drury & Kaiser, 2014). However, Study 2 found no difference in perceptions of sexism based on whether the confronter was a target (i.e., woman) or nontarget (i.e., man) of sexism. This finding is consistent with Czopp et al.'s (2006) results that confronted participants decreased stereotyping regardless of the confronter's target status, but it is inconsistent with Rasinski and Czopp's (2010) finding that target (vs. nontarget) confronters cause lower perceptions of bias. Nontarget (vs. target) confrontations are more surprising, but may not result in more perceptions of sexism (Study 2) or decreased prejudiced behavior (Czopp et al., 2006).

Although previous research shows that confronters are viewed negatively (Kaiser & Miller, 2001), these studies show that confronters also may be viewed positively—all confronter ratings were above scale mid-points (Tables 1 and 2). Because we only examined leader confrontations, future research is needed to determine whether these evaluations are limited to leaders. Leaders are seen as having a special responsibility to confront prejudice (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2014) and may be regarded more positively when they conform to those expectations. Participants—especially women—may have felt that the sexism expressed by a fellow candidate might hinder their ability to attain their desired position; female participants saw the statement as more sexist and consistently rated the leader more positively than male participants. Women may have recognized the sexism and then evaluated the confronter more positively, given that the confronter took steps to curb sexism.

Finally, this work has implications for organizations and policymakers. Our studies demonstrate the importance of confronting prejudice publically. Study 1 revealed that confronting a perpetrator in the presence of others was perceived as more likely to reduce sexism. Study 2 further revealed that public confrontations increased sexism perceptions of gender bias. Applied to workplace settings, this pattern of results suggests that publically confronting everyday prejudice, including gender bias (De Lemus, Navarro, Megías, Velásquez, & Ryan, 2014) or sexual harassment (Buchanan & Settles, 2014; Drury & Kaiser, 2014), causes people to see these actions as more sexist. Thus, organizations should lead by example and encourage people to publically confront. Like other top-down approaches to

prejudice reduction, this may restore egalitarian norms and reduce discrimination (Paluck, 2009).

Limitations and Future Directions

Despite its implications, these studies are not without some limitations. Because we used a scenario methodology, it is possible that measuring perceptions at the time of an actual confrontation might produce different results. Nevertheless, evaluations of confronters may sometimes occur after the fact. When accusations of prejudice arise, people often look to leaders to determine whether prejudice actually occurred (Buchanan & Settles, 2014). For example, after Mitt Romney made dehumanizing statements about "binders full of women," people looked to secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, to see whether the event was sexist. Although she did not make a public statement, a photograph showing a disgusted Clinton went viral on the internet (Williams, 2012). These studies may parallel these real-world situations in which people look to their leaders to determine whether sexism has occurred. Although our procedure involved hypothetical scenarios and subtle manipulations (e.g., the context manipulation was a single word "publically" or "privately"), they still produced significant results. There were also a handful of marginal effects and some of our measures contained only one or two items. Next steps in this research program would be to replicate the current findings as well as consider the recipient, source, message, and context when an actual confrontation occurs.

Future research should also examine how different social identities may intersect with gender to influence evaluations of confronters. Intersectionality theories suggest that women may experience different types of prejudice, depending on the intersection between gender and other social identities (e.g., race/ethnicity, class, age, sexuality; Crenshaw, 2005). It is possible, for example, that Black women confronters will be evaluated more negatively than White women confronters because of double jeopardy (Sesko & Bierntat, 2010); they have two low-status identities and may be evaluated particularly negatively. Yet, research supporting the nonprototypicality hypothesis (Goff, Thomas, & Jackson, 2008; Sesko & Biernat, 2010) suggests that Black women are neither prototypical of "women" nor of "Blacks," and thus experience qualitatively different prejudices compared to White women and Black men. Indeed, Black women confronters may be evaluated more positively than White women confronters because Black women are stereotypically expected to be agentic—assertive and outspoken. Black women are expected to be "confrontational" (Livingston, Rosette, & Washington, 2012, p. 355) and dominant Black female leaders do not experience the same backlash as dominant White female leaders. It is also important to examine whether people from ingroups (e.g., other women, other Black women) and outgroups (e.g., White men) similarly evaluate Black women confronters. Another limitation of our studies is that we do not

have demographics regarding age, year in school, ethnicity or sexual orientation. Future research should consider whether different social identities (e.g., White vs. racial/ethnic minority) and their intersections moderate these effects.

Conclusion

This work suggests that the consequences of leader confronting depend on the recipient, message, source, and context of the confrontation. When male leaders confront sexism, they are both more influential and evaluated more favorably if they confront indirectly in public. When female leaders confront sexism, however, they may have to choose between being influential or evaluated favorably. If they want to reduce prejudice, female leaders should confront publically; however, if they want to be evaluated favorably, they should confront privately. Hopefully, confronting eventually will stop everyday sexism from occurring in the first place, eliminating this trade-off for women.

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