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CONFRONTING

The Interpersonal Costs and Rewards of Confronting Sexism

A thesis submitted by

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Abstract

The present studies sought to examine the contexts that increase women's willingness to confront instances of sexism. In particular, I sought to understand how a bystander's reaction to a confrontation may affect the confronter's feelings of isolation and intention to confront sexism in the future. Results show that when bystanders reward women for confronting sexism, confronters report feeling less isolated than when bystanders discourage confronters or stay silent. Furthermore, a bystander's silence may feel as discouraging as an explicitly negative response (e.g., "you're a troublemaker") to confronters because confronters are in a vulnerable position and are seeking social support. Confronters who are met with silence from bystanders may feel as isolated as those who are met with a negative response, and, thus, feel just as alone. Though previous literature has emphasized the need to decrease interpersonal costs, these results suggest that this may not be enough for confronters of sexism.

Keywords: confrontation, sexism, bystanders, silence

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The Interpersonal Costs and Rewards of Confronting Sexism

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In the aftermath of sexual allegations made against Harvey Weinstein, women and men alike have banded together to speak out against countless high-profile men in the media who have been accused of sexual harassment. While brave victims continue to come forth almost daily to expose well-known individuals such as Louis C.K., Roy Price, Charlie Rose, Kevin Spacey, Al Franken, and Jeffrey Tambor, a surge of sexual harassment reports of this size is fairly uncommon. In 2016, 12,860 sexual harassment charges were filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Of these cases, 83.4%, or 10,725 cases were filed by women (EEOC, 2017). While these numbers are striking, they represent only a small subset of sex-based harassment towards women: women who report their experiences. Though cases of sexism toward women are many, Allen, Armstrong, Clarin, and Velasquez (1988), suggest that only the severest of cases (e.g. forced contact) are reported, resulting in an underreporting of sexism that appears less serious to bystanders such as subtler forms of sexual harassment. While reporting inappropriate behavior is one method of addressing sexism, women may choose to confront their perpetrators by expressing their dissatisfaction either verbally or nonverbally to indicate that they found the perpetrators actions or remarks unacceptable or inappropriate.

Despite confrontation being an effective way in which we can reduce sexism, there are several reasons why someone may not report an instance of sexism or express disapproval to perpetrators directly (Mallett & Wagner, 2011; Becker, Zawadzki, & Shields, 2014). Imagine a woman who posts a status on

Facebook: “I was leading a meeting today and a male coworker of mine said it must be my ‘time of the month’ because I disagreed with him. He said this in front of everyone! I told him that was a seriously inappropriate thing to say. Inappropriate, right?” Though the creator of this status is likely hoping for a positive response, it is possible that a friend comments, instead, “Don’t take it so seriously.” Women often do not confront sexism so as to avoid outcomes such as appearing “hypersensitive” or as seeming like a “troublemaker” (Hyers, 2007; Kaiser & Miller, 2001; Kaiser & Miller 2003). Furthermore, choosing to avoid confrontation is not without its own repercussions. While staying silent may help women avoid the interpersonal costs associated with reporting sexism, it is ineffective at reducing sexism by preventing perpetrators from repeating sexist behaviors (Gulker, Mark, & Monteith, 2013).

Instances of sexism are unlikely to stop if women do not challenge perpetrators because perpetrators may be unaware of the discomfort, upset, and marginalization caused by their actions or remarks. Indeed, sexist language is common and often occurs in the form of “jokes” which are largely considered less offensive and unworthy of confrontation compared to other discriminatory jokes (Woodzicka, Mallett, Hendricks, & Pruitt, 2015). Still, choosing not to confront may result in *intrapersonal* costs such as feeling guilty, as if one has let down women as a group simply to evade the anxiety associated with confronting (Shelton, Richeson, Salvatore, & Hill, 2006). Additionally, confronting sexism benefits society as perpetrators may express sincere apologies and exhibit less sexist attitudes towards others after being challenged (Mallett & Wagner, 2011).

Though previous literature has addressed how confrontations lead to positive group outcomes for women, the negative effects on the self when one chooses not to confront, and why people choose not to confront (i.e. social costs), it has not yet directly looked at whether decreasing interpersonal costs may increase confrontation behaviors (Kaiser & Miller 2003; Shelton, Richeson, Salvatore, & Hill, 2006). That is, when studying the social effects of confronting, researchers have not considered the full range of social responses a confronter may face. I propose that reducing the social costs of confronting sexism in order to increase future confrontations may not be enough if we as a society do not directly reward women who demonstrate bravery by taking a stand against sexism.

Previous research has focused mainly on how the possibility of incurring negative evaluations from bystanders may make women reluctant to confront sexism (Shelton & Stewart, 2004), overlooking the possibility that a bystander may stay silent (neither actively discouraging or encouraging the confronter) and may not provide feedback to the confronter (Kaiser, Hagiwara, Malahy, & Wilkins, 2009). Moreover, silence may be a common response to witnessing prejudice confrontations because bystanders tend to consider the cost-effectiveness of getting involved, making them more likely to avoid intervening (Brinkman, Dean, Simpson, McGinley & Rosén, 2015). Imagine that the Facebook status sharing a sexist experience received zero replies. In this case, the poster is unable to determine how her audience is reacting to her experience. As silence from a bystander fails to provide insight into a bystander's thoughts, a

confronter may feel similarly discouraged and unsupported as if she received a blatantly negative response from a bystander (Van Heugten, 2011). On the other hand, women like and respect other women who confront (rather than ignore) sexist comments (Dodd, Giuliano, Boutell, & Moran, 2001). If this message was conveyed by female bystanders to female confronters, women who confront sexism may feel emboldened. Thus, as a society we may need to take the step of *rewarding* (as opposed to simply *not discouraging*) women who confront sexism in order to encourage those women to confront again in the future. Others' silence in the face of confronters' courageous acts may isolate confronters and prompt them to wonder whether others are disparaging them behind closed doors.

The present research aims to address this gap in the literature by testing the hypothesis that when women who envision confronting sexism are reminded that they can expect support from bystanders, they may be more willing to confront sexism when it actually happens. However, when women imagine that bystanders will stay silent and not openly support them, they may be less willing to confront sexism when it happens. Silence may be considered an ambiguous response from bystanders, which may lead confronters to feel rejected, resulting in negative emotions such as feeling alone (Smart Richman & Leary, 2009). Although bystanders may remain silent for any number of reasons (e.g. fearing the perpetrator's reaction, being disliked) when they witness prejudice confrontations, confronters may interpret silence as a negative evaluation of themselves. Moreover, targets may interpret bystander silence as a show of support for the sexist comment (Brinkman et al., 2015). If targets interpret silence

in this way, confronters may guess that silent bystanders are judging the confronter as overreacting to the comment. On the other hand, targets may guess that encouraging bystanders see the target in a positive light given their open support of her confrontation. The more costs one anticipates, the less likely they are to confront prejudice on behalf of others (Good, Moss-Racusin, & Sanchez, 2012). In the event that a confronter interprets silence as an implication that the bystander thinks that she is a troublemaker, she may feel just as isolated as when she is explicitly unsupported.

If women believe that confronting sexism will cause bystanders to explicitly discourage their actions or stay silent, and if such expectations increase feelings of isolation, they may be unwilling to confront sexism when it occurs. I sought to determine how anticipated feelings of isolation following hypothetical experiences of discouragement, silence, and reward affect women's intentions to confront sexism in the future.

Study 1

Though *not* labelling a woman who confronts sexism as a troublemaker may be considered less harmful than actively labelling her as such, remaining silent as a bystander while the confronter makes herself vulnerable by speaking up may affect the confronter just as negatively as an openly discouraging response. That women are unlikely to confront sexism when accompanied by another woman who remains silent than when they are alone with the perpetrator suggests that women are seeking cues from female bystanders in these scenarios (Swim & Hyers, 1999). Thus, the act of confronting may be an event in which the target of

sexism is awaiting an onlooker's reaction to the incident and may take a female bystander's silence as a cue for how to act. Study 1 tested the hypothesis that women who imagine themselves confronting a sexist comment interpret a bystander's silence as explicit discouragement of that confrontation because both silence and discouragement alike (when compared to support) may cause confronters to feel socially isolated and vulnerable. Anticipating silence or discouragement and, thus, anticipating isolation, may decrease women's willingness to confront actual experiences of sexism in the future.

Participants

Participants were recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk and paid 50 cents for their time (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). Sample size was determined by a power analysis which indicated that 87 people were needed per condition in order to detect large effects ($d = .8$; outlined by Cohen, 1992). I converted correlation values from Kaiser and Miller (2004) to determine an effect size to use in the power analysis.¹ Ultimately, 258 White women completed the study, ranging in age from 20 to 77 with an average age of 39.62 ($SD = 13.24$).

Procedure

Participants identifying as both White and as women were rerouted from Mechanical Turk to the experiment through a prescreen questionnaire to determine eligibility.² Gender and race questions were embedded into a series of

¹The correlation value, $r(146) = 0.19$, $p < .05$, pulled from Kaiser and Miller (2004), reflects the correlation between participant reports of confronting discrimination and expectations of reducing sexism by confronting gender prejudice.

²The prescreen questionnaire contained two questions to identify the race and gender of the participant as well as two distractor questions that prompted participants to indicate their age and political orientation. Participants who were ineligible were not compensated.

irrelevant questions to disguise the true eligibility criteria. Eligible participants routed to the main study and received the following instructions on a Qualtrics webpage: “You will read a hypothetical scenario and be asked to imagine yourself in this situation. Although the situation may not reflect the response you might actually have, please imagine yourself as if you have truly done exactly what the situation describes. Imagine that you are hanging out in the break room with your co-workers, John and Katie. John tells the following joke: ‘What do you call a woman with half a brain? Gifted.’ After John finishes telling the joke, you respond, ‘That’s not funny, John. It’s kind of sexist. Right, Katie?’” This sexist joke was selected from Woodzicka, Mallett, Hendricks, and Pruitt (2015). Next, participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions in which they imagined the response of the female bystander, Katie. In the discouragement condition, Katie replied, “I thought it was funny!” while in the encouragement condition she replied, “Yeah, John, that’s sexist!” In the silent condition, Katie changed the subject and described her plans for the weekend. Following this, participants completed self-report measures that assessed how interpersonally costly participants perceived their actions to be (e.g. “To what extent do you think Katie sees you as argumentative?”), how interpersonally rewarding participants perceived their actions (e.g. “To what extent do you think Katie sees you as brave?”), and how isolated (e.g. “How isolated would you feel after this interaction?”) participants felt after Katie’s response. Participants were asked to indicate how likely it was that they would confront a sexist individual in the future (e.g. “How likely is it that you would confront someone like John in the

future?") after being asked to consider the following definition of confronting: "When one confronts another person, they express to this individual that they find their behavior offensive or unwelcome." All items were randomized within each measure and the order of measures was randomized. Following these measures, participants completed several potential moderators of the effect of condition on interpersonal outcomes, specifically identification as a feminist and expectations that confrontations generally reduce sexism (refer to Appendix for all full measures). These were included for exploratory purposes and no hypotheses were developed a priori. These measures were included because research shows that women who identify as feminists have been found to be more likely to confront instances of prejudice than women who do not identify as feminists and women who have high expectations that confrontation reduces sexism are more likely to confront instances of sexism (Ayres, Friedman, & Leaper, 2009; Kaiser & Miller, 2003).

Hypotheses

I hypothesized that when participants imagined being rewarded by Katie for confronting John's sexist joke, they would express lower feelings of isolation and higher intentions to confront in the future. When Katie discouraged the participant's confrontational behavior *or* ignored the confrontation, I expected that they would indicate higher feelings of isolation and lower intentions to confront in the future (Figure 1). Additionally, I hypothesized that participants in the encouragement condition would perceive more interpersonal rewards (e.g. appearing authentic and brave) and fewer interpersonal costs (e.g. appearing

hypersensitive and irritating) than participants in the discouraging and silent conditions. Finally, I predicted that feelings of isolation would act as a mediator between bystander reaction and intentions to confront sexism in the future. The full measures are included in the Appendix.

Results and Discussion

Interpersonal outcomes. A between-subjects, one-way ANOVA revealed an effect of bystander feedback on perceived interpersonal costs, $F(2, 254) = 36.96, p < .001$. Tukey's post hoc comparisons showed a significant difference in perceived interpersonal costs when comparing the discouraging and silent conditions to the encouragement condition. Participants interpreted Katie's silence as an indication that Katie held a more negative impression of the participant in the discouraging and silent conditions compared to the encouraging condition, $p < .001$. The discouraging and silent conditions did not differ, $p = .63$. In addition, an ANOVA revealed a significant difference in perceived interpersonal rewards between conditions, $F(2, 254) = 36.90, p < .001$. Tukey's post hoc comparisons identified a significant difference between the encouraging condition and the discouragement and silent conditions such that participants in the encouraging condition interpreted Katie's encouragement as an indication that she viewed the participant more positively, $p < .001$. The discouraging and silent conditions did not differ, $p = .22$. Refer to Table 1 for the descriptive statistics of these variables.

Isolation. A similar pattern emerged when looking at how isolated participants imagined they would feel after receiving feedback from Katie. An

ANOVA revealed a significant difference in feelings of isolation between the encouragement condition and the discouragement and silent conditions, $F(2, 255) = 18.87, p < .001$. Tukey's test for post hoc comparisons revealed that participants in the discouragement and silent conditions (which did not differ from each other, $p = .22$) imagined feeling more isolated than participants in the encouragement condition, $p < .001$.

Willingness to confront. A between-subjects, one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine the effect of bystander feedback on intentions to confront sexism in the future. Results of the analysis suggested no significant differences between conditions, $F(2, 250) = .48, p = .617$.

Mediation. I predicted that feelings of isolation would serve as a mediator, such that feelings of isolation lead to decreased intentions to confront individuals in the future for their sexist behavior when women imagine being explicitly discouraged for confronting and when they imagine silence following their decision to confront (this model is depicted in Figure 1). I conducted this mediation analysis using Andrew Hayes' SPSS PROCESS macro with model 4 using 5,000 bootstrapped resamples. Bystander response was entered as the independent variable (coded as 0 = discouragement condition, 0 = silent condition, and 1 = encouragement condition) while isolation (standardized) was entered as the mediator, and interpersonal costs was entered as the dependent variable. The expected indirect effect of imagined bystander feedback on intentions to confront sexism in the future was non-significant, $b = -.13, 95\% \text{BCa CI} [-.33, .031]$ (bias corrected bootstrap confidence interval; Field, 2013).

Consequently, my hypothesis that isolation would mediate the effect of bystander feedback on intentions to confront sexism in the future was unsupported. The correlation matrix for these variables can be viewed in Table 2.

Despite the non-significant expected indirect effect of imagined bystander feedback on intentions to confront sexism in the future, I conducted two mediational analyses with interpersonal costs and interpersonal rewards as the dependent variable, respectively. Although hypotheses for these mediation analyses were not determined a priori, I chose to conduct these mediation analyses because it may be reasonable to suspect that feelings of isolation are intimately related to bystander feedback. Thus, one might expect that the effect of imagined bystander feedback would be transmitted to perceived interpersonal costs and rewards through feelings of isolation. Although the indirect effect of bystander feedback on perceived interpersonal rewards non-significant, $b = -.02$, 95% BCa CI [-.17, .12], isolation was a significant mediator for the relation between bystander feedback and perceived interpersonal costs, $b = -0.20$, 95% BCa CI [-0.39, -0.05], such that bystander feedback affects perceived interpersonal costs indirectly through isolation. This model is depicted in Figure 2.

Moderation. Finally, moderation analyses were conducted for feminist identification and expectations of reducing sexism by confronting gender prejudice. After mean centering my continuous predictor variable (Expectations of Reducing Sexism) and recoding my categorical variables (condition and feminist identification) such that zero would be meaningful (condition: 0 =

discouraging bystander, 1 = encouraging bystander, 2 = silent bystander; feminist identification: 0 = yes, 1 = no, 2 = neither), my predictors and interaction terms were entered into six separate regression models. Of these moderation analyses, two reached significance. Expectations of reducing sexism by confronting gender prejudice was found to be a significant moderator of the relationship between bystander feedback and perceived interpersonal costs, such that higher expectations of reducing sexism by confronting gender prejudice lead to fewer perceived interpersonal costs for participants who imagined a silent bystander, while participants who imagined a discouraging bystander and held higher expectations of reducing sexism by confronting gender prejudice perceived more interpersonal costs when they held higher expectations of reducing sexism by confronting gender prejudice, $\Delta R^2 = .023$, $F(3, 256) = 4.48$, $p = .014$. There was a marginally significant moderation of expectations of reducing sexism by confronting gender prejudice for the relationship between bystander feedback and intention to confront sexism in the future such that participants with higher expectations of reducing sexism by confronting gender prejudice expressed higher intentions to confront sexism in the future the most when imagining a silent bystander compared to imagining an encouraging or discouraging bystander, $\Delta R^2 = .01$, $F(3, 257) = 40.08$, $p = .056$. Refer to Figures 3 and 4 to see these interaction effects.

These results show that standing by silently is paramount to disparaging a woman who confronts sexism, in the eyes of the confronter. Additionally, it appears that bystander feedback affects perceived interpersonal costs through

feelings of isolation. Furthermore, it is encouraging to recognize that women who believe that confronting sexism leads to decreased sexism in society may be protected against perceived interpersonal costs despite facing silent bystanders. However, participants did not demonstrate differences in their willingness to confront sexism in the future as hypothesized. Study 2 was designed to replicate these results as well as modify measures to better evaluate how participants would feel and react to sexist encounters.

Study 2

Modifications to the measures from Study 1 included the addition of items from the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI) that measure hostile sexism and the Implicit Theories of Personality measure (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Dweck, 2000). Hostile sexist attitudes reflect a belief in negative stereotypes about women that justify male dominance while the Implicit Theories of Personality measure assesses to what extent one believes that people are capable of changing their personalities. All items may be found in the Appendix. Participants in Study 2 were also given a more refined measure of intentions to confront sexism in the future that did not include the phrase “to confront” because participants may not use the definition of confronting that I used in the present study in their everyday language. Participants may consider, for example, confrontation to be an expression of aggressive behavior rather than simply conveying displeasure or unease with a perpetrator. Asking participants if they would “confront” perpetrators as I asked in Study 1 may have led participants to misestimate when they might confront perpetrators under my definition of confronting. In addition

to rewording these items, participants completed a thought listing task to express their preferred actions and responses to the sexist joke so that I may better understand what participants might want to do or say if it was not a direct confrontation (“That’s not funny, John. It’s kind of sexist.”) Finally, items were added to create an expanded isolation measure to more accurately gauge feelings of isolation because feelings of isolation were measured with a solitary item, rather than a full measure, in Study 1. These alterations were expected to result in more sensitive items that would more accurately measure how participants feel about, and react to, sexist encounters.

Participants

As in Study 1, the sample was acquired through Amazon’s Mechanical Turk and participants were compensated with 50 cents for their time (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). A total of 237 White women completed the study with an average age of 40.61 ($SD = 14.67$), ranging in age from 19 to 88.

Procedure

The procedure for the present studied followed the procedure of Study 1 closely. Participants from Mechanical Turk were given the same prescreen questionnaire as in Study 1 that determined eligibility for the study. After imagining that the bystander Katie either supported the participant, discouraged, the participant, or remained silent, participants completed questionnaires that assessed how isolated they would feel following this interaction as well as how interpersonally costly or rewarding they perceived the situation to be. Participants also indicated how likely it was that they would confront sexism again in the

future. Thus, the procedure for this study was the same as Study 1, with a few notable exceptions. The Implicit Theories of Personality measure as well as a measure of hostile sexism (Dweck, 2000; Glick & Fiske, 1996) were included as potential moderators. To assess the preferred actions of participants I provided them with an opportunity to write, in their own words, what they might have done or said instead in the hypothetical situation. Additionally, participants were able to describe what they would have liked the bystander Katie to say or do. The full measures are included in the Appendix.

Hypotheses

I predicted that participants would express lower feelings of isolation and higher intentions to confront in the future when they imagined being rewarded by Katie for confronting John's sexist joke. I also expected participants to indicate higher feelings of isolation and lower intentions to confront in the future when they imagined that Katie discouraged the participant *or* ignored the confrontation. Though these hypotheses were made in Study 1 and were unsubstantiated by the data, I expected that the changes made to my measures in Study 2 would support these predictions.

I expected results from Study 1 to replicate in this follow-up study. Accordingly, I expected participants to perceive more interpersonal rewards (e.g. appearing strong and true to herself) and perceive fewer interpersonal costs (e.g. appearing like a troublemaker and hypersensitive) in the encouraging condition when compared to both the discouraging and silent conditions. Additionally, I hypothesized that isolation would mediate the relation between bystander reaction

and intentions to confront sexism in the future, as well as bystander reaction and interpersonal costs, and bystander reaction and interpersonal rewards.

Results and Discussion

Interpersonal outcomes.

I expected the same pattern of results from Study 1 in the present study; I anticipated that participants in the silent and discouraging conditions would perceive more interpersonal costs and fewer interpersonal rewards than participants in the encouraging condition. Two between-subjects, one-way ANOVAs revealed that participants perceived interpersonal costs differently depending on bystander feedback, $F(2, 236) = 27.48, p < .001$, and perceived interpersonal rewards differently depending on bystander feedback, $F(2, 233) = 33.84, p < .001$. Tukey's test for post hoc comparisons identified a significant difference between the encouragement condition and the discouragement and silent conditions, such that participants who imagined facing a silent or discouraging bystander perceived more interpersonal costs, $p < .001$, and fewer interpersonal rewards, $p < .001$, than participants who imagined an encouraging bystander. Refer to Table 3 for the descriptive statistics of these variables. These results confirmed my expectation that effects of condition on perceptions of interpersonal costs and perceptions of interpersonal rewards would replicate in this follow-up study.

Isolation.

A between-subjects, one-way ANOVA indicated a significant difference between conditions regarding feelings of isolation, $F(2, 236) = 75.15, p < .001$.

Tukey's test for post hoc comparisons revealed that participants who imagined being discouraged by a bystander or imagined being given no feedback from a bystander felt similarly isolated to each other, $p = .86$, and significantly more isolated than participants who imagined being encouraged by a bystander, $p < .001$.

Willingness to confront.

One aim of this follow-up study was to create a measure that might capture intentions to confront sexism in the future. I conducted a between-subjects, one-way ANOVA to determine if there was a significant difference between conditions on intentions to confront sexism in the future. However, there was no significant difference in intentions to confront sexism in the future, $F(2, 237) = 1.78, p = .17$. This suggests that being reminded that they may receive negative feedback from a bystander when confronting sexism may not necessarily discourage individuals from confronting future instances of sexism. However, it is important to note that we are not examining actual behavior which may differ from anticipated behavior.

Mediation.

I expected isolation to serve as a mediator between bystander feedback and perceived interpersonal costs, as well as between bystander feedback and perceived interpersonal rewards, and bystander feedback and intention to confront sexism in the future. I conducted three mediation analyses in Andrew Hayes' SPSS PROCESS macro with model 4 using 5,000 bootstrapped resamples, (Hayes, 2017). For the first mediation analysis, I inserted condition (bystander

feedback) as the independent variable (coded as 0 = discouragement condition, 0 = silent condition, 1 = encouragement condition), the isolation (standardized) variable as the mediator, and interpersonal costs as the dependent variable. This mediation was found to be significant, such that bystander feedback affected perceived interpersonal costs indirectly through isolation, $b = -0.56$, 95% BCa CI [-0.86, -0.32]. This model is depicted in Figure 5.

For my second mediation analysis, I replaced the dependent variable with perceived interpersonal rewards. This mediation reached significance as well, suggesting that bystander feedback affected perceived interpersonal rewards indirectly through isolation, $b = 0.60$, 95% BCa CI [0.27, .98].

The final mediation analysis revealed no significant mediation of isolation between bystander feedback and intentions to confront sexism in the future, $b = -0.06$, 95% BCa CI [-0.39, .30]. This model is depicted in Figure 6. A correlation matrix of these variables is included in Table 4.

Moderation.

Implicit Theories of Personality and hostile sexism were both examined as possible moderators of the effect of bystander feedback condition on intentions to confront sexism in the future, interpersonal costs, and interpersonal rewards. After mean centering my continuous predictor variables (Implicit Theories of Personality and hostile sexism) and recoding my categorical variable (condition) such that zero would be meaningful (0 = discouraging bystander, 1 = encouraging bystander, 2 = silent bystander), my predictors and interaction terms were entered into six separate regression models. Of these moderation analyses, one reached

significance. Although Implicit Theories of Personality did not moderate any effects, hostile sexism was found to be a significant moderator, $\Delta R^2 = .02$, $F(3, 235) = 4.414$, $p = .02$. Among participants in the encouragement and discouragement conditions, those who held more hostile sexist attitudes perceived more costs than those with less hostile sexist attitudes. This relationship did not emerge for participants in the silent condition. Interestingly, individuals in the silent condition who were higher on hostile sexism perceived fewer interpersonal costs than those who were lower on hostile sexism (see Figure 7.)

Two research assistants coded open-ended responses to the questions, “How else might you have responded?” (Cohen’s kappa = 0.56), “If you would not have responded ‘That’s not funny, John. It’s kind of sexist.’ What would you have done or said?” (Cohen’s kappa = 0.65), and “What would you have liked Katie to do or say?” (Cohen’s kappa = 0.58). Any discrepancies were resolved by a third coder. When asked, “How else might you have responded?,” 73% of participants described a confrontational response (e.g. “That isn’t funny,” “Told him that it wasn’t appropriate.”) while 24% of participants indicated a desire to avoid confrontation by remaining silent or leaving the room. A chi-square test of independence was conducted to determine if these responses differed by condition and the test revealed no association between desired response and condition, $\chi^2(4) = 5.21$, $p = .26$. A similar pattern emerged when participants were asked, “If you would not have responded ‘That’s not funny, John. It’s kind of sexist.’ What would you have done or said?”. 70% of participants described a confrontational response while 28% of participants expressed a desire to avoid confrontation.

Again, a chi-square test of independence showed no association between desired response and condition, $\chi^2(4) = 6.87, p = .14$. An overwhelming majority of participants, 82%, expressed a desire for the bystander Katie to support them while 3% wanted her to do nothing. There was no association between preference of Katie's reaction and condition, $\chi^2(8) = 12.37, p = .14$. Although most participants indicated a desire to confront the perpetrator (John) and most participants reported that they would like support from Katie, these variables were not significantly related as revealed by a phi-coefficient, $\Phi = 0.152, p = .72$. It seems that, regardless of the desire to confront an instance of sexism, women prefer bystanders to be supportive rather than silent.

General Discussion

The present research examined the effects of bystander reactions to an imagined confrontation of sexism on how the confronter feels about the exchange and whether she intends to confront sexism in the future. I expected that when a woman imagined being rewarded for her confrontation behavior she would feel less isolated and express a stronger willingness to confront sexism than when she imagined encountering disagreement or silence from a bystander. However, in the event that she imagined receiving no feedback in response to her action, I expected that she would feel similarly isolated and less willing to confront sexism in the future. Additionally, I expected participants to perceive more interpersonal costs and fewer rewards when they imagined a discouraging or silent bystander compared to when they imagined an encouraging bystander. In order to guess how bystanders might perceive confronters, participants might draw inferences

based on the bystander's behavior. A silent bystander may be viewed as supporting the sexist comment, thus leading the confronter to assume that the bystander views the confronter negatively.

Results from the present studies support the expectation that women who receive no feedback from a bystander after imagining confronting an instance of sexism feel just as isolated as women who are openly discouraged by a bystander. However, both studies failed to provide support for my hypothesis that bystander feedback would affect intentions to confront sexism in the future. Given that participants expressed positive meta-perceptions when they imagined an encouraging bystander (e.g. believing that an encouraging bystander views the participant as brave) —and, consequently, believing that the silent or discouraging bystander views the participant as a troublemaker—yet did not express a decreased desire to confront sexism in the future may suggest that people do not confront instances of sexism for the satisfaction of others but appreciate support from them nonetheless. There are several limitations to consider, as well, that may explain these results.

I developed the intention to confront sexism in the future scale to understand how participants may behave in real life following a sexist encounter in which a bystander remains silent, supports the participant, or discourages the participant. Unfortunately, when participants are asked to imagine themselves in a situation, it can be difficult to accurately envision how they may feel in the future. This is akin to the phenomenon of affective forecasting errors in which individuals make inaccuracies when projecting how they will feel in the future

(Wilson & Gilbert, 2003). Although it has been shown that people over-estimate how likely it is that they will confront a sexist individual in real life, we do not yet know what effect bystander reactions may have on a target's affect, and, consequently, her actual confrontational behavior (Swim & Hyers, 1999).

Furthermore, it is possible that this measure is not yet capturing the construct I am intending to measure. An in-person study in which participants encounter sexism and receive real bystander feedback and are given an opportunity to confront sexism again will be the best way to determine how this feedback might affect real confrontation rates. Though intent to confront sexism in the future did not seem to be affected by imagined bystander feedback, it would be presumptive to suggest that there are no potential behavioral consequences to facing negative or silent bystanders. Importantly, both studies demonstrate consequences of imagining bystander silence. If women indeed find silent bystanders just as disapproving as openly discouraging bystanders, it would be important to consider what interventions, if any, might alleviate the resulting negative effects such as feeling isolated and interpreting interpersonal costs. Future research should continue to explore the effects of bystander silence on confrontations of sexism.

While previous literature has examined some reactions from onlookers to women who confront sexism, little research has explored how silence affects female confronters and how female confronters respond to these reactions. Specifically, research has not examined whether women who anticipate being discouraged by, encouraged by,

or met with silence from others when they imagine confronting sexism will use that expectation to gauge whether they should actually confront. Past work has implied that women will feel empowered to confront sexism when it is not interpersonally costly to do so—that is, in an environment in which others do not regard them as hypersensitive for speaking up. Not only does research suggest that attributing negative events to discrimination result in interpersonal costs (e.g. being seen as a complainer), but that *acting* on these attributions by confronting someone who makes a prejudicial statement leads to interpersonal costs (e.g. not being liked) (Kaiser & Miller, 2001; Kaiser & Miller, 2003; Dodd, Guiliano, Boutell, & Moran, 2001).

However, simply reducing social costs to confronting sexism may not be enough to encourage women to continue challenging perpetrators. Situations in which a bystander avoids getting involved in a potentially hostile situation may be common and may impact how likely it is that women will challenge an inappropriate comment in the future (Kawakami, Dunn, Karmali, & Dovidio, 2009). Likewise, it is important that we identify in what contexts a woman may feel most comfortable publicly voicing concerns about sexism. It has been suggested that when women confront, they may anticipate support from other women and hostility from men (Swim & Hyers, 1999). Therefore, the present studies focus on female bystanders, from whom silence might be unexpected. That women are less likely to confront sexism when a female bystander remains silent compared to when a male bystander remains silent may suggest that women do not expect men to share the same perception as women. Indeed, men have been

shown to identify sexist comments as accurately as women but find them less offensive (Swim & Hyers, 1999). Thus, we might expect targets to be largely unaffected by silent male bystanders.

Identifying factors that increase the willingness of women to confront sexism will elucidate *why* women are often reluctant to confront sexism. Challenging discrimination may increase awareness in society that sexism is subtle but present (Czopp, Monteith, & Mark, 2006). Moreover, many perpetrators of sexism do not intend to be rude and confronting them for their behavior helps to inform them that their behavior is wrong. Confronting sexism is an important way we can prevent perpetrators from repeating discriminatory behavior in the future (Swim & Hyers, 1999). By drawing focus to environmental factors that may encourage women to confront sexism and by communicating the importance of interpersonal rewards, we can identify ways in which both men and women can confront and recognize sexism as it occurs. Making it clear to supportive citizens that standing idly by is insufficient for increasing confrontation rates may be a simple way dramatically change the culture surrounding sexism reports.

Tables and Figures

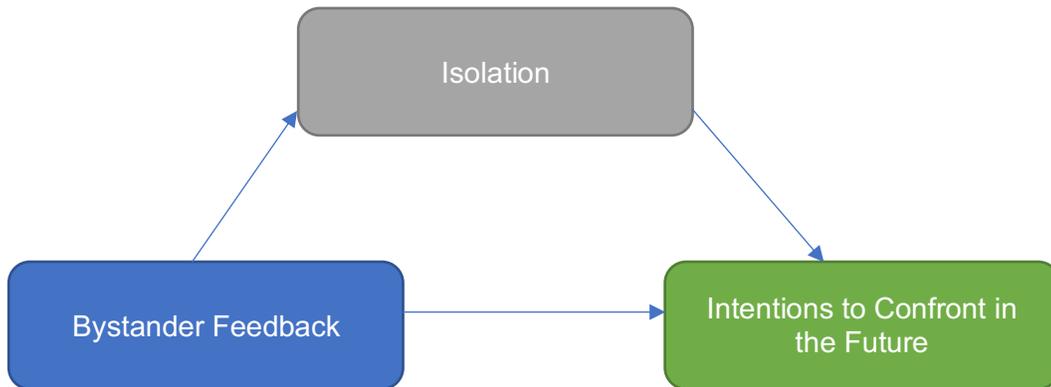


Figure 1. Predicted simple mediation model where isolation mediates the effect of bystander feedback on intentions to confront in the future.

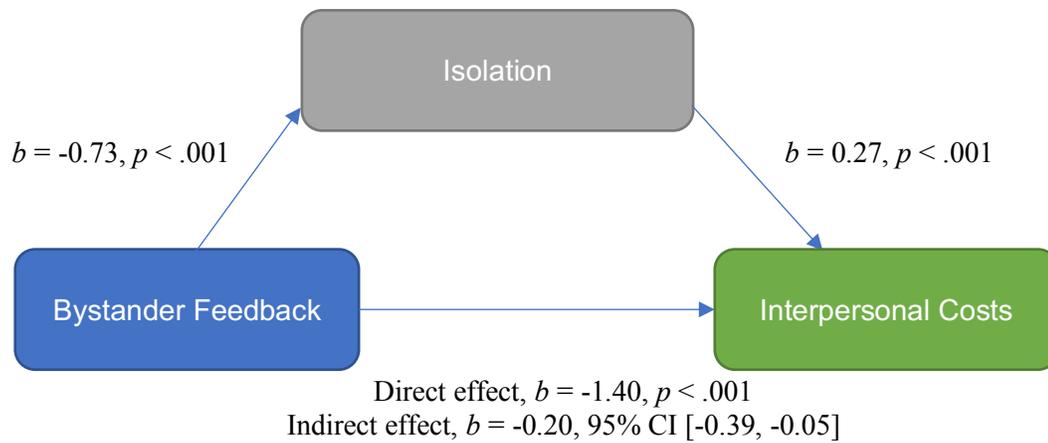


Figure 2. Simple mediation model where isolation mediates the effect of bystander feedback on interpersonal costs (Study 1, $N = 257$; 5,000 resamples).

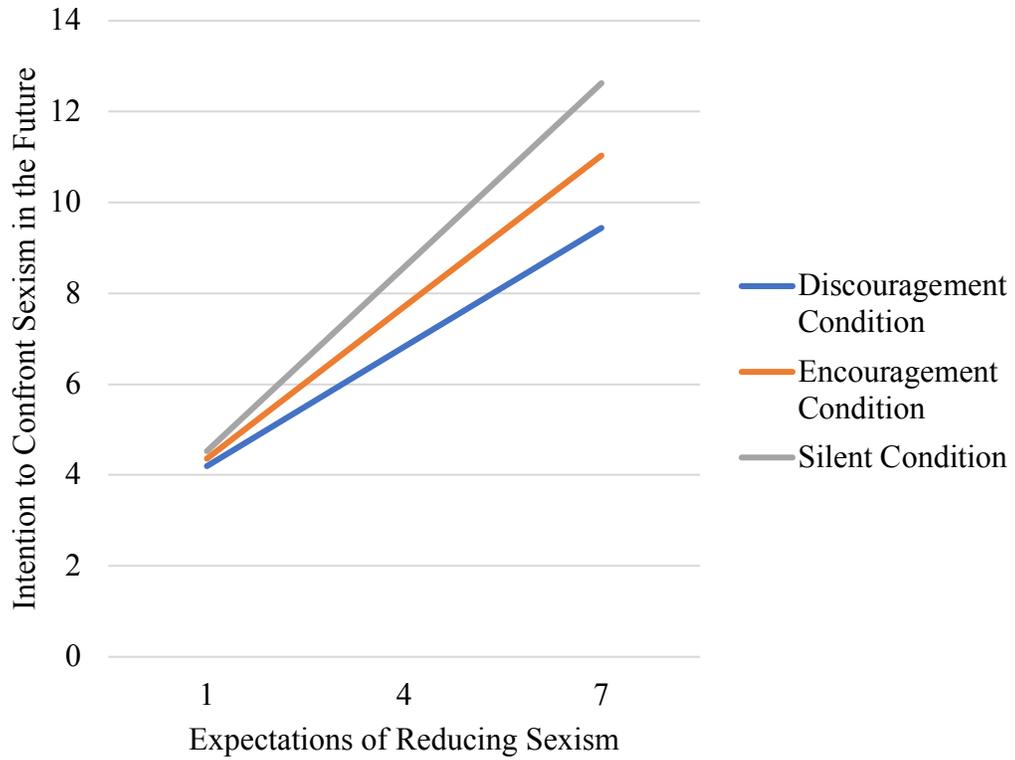


Figure 3. Expectations of reducing sexism as a moderator of the effect of bystander feedback on intention to confront sexism in the future, $p = .056$.

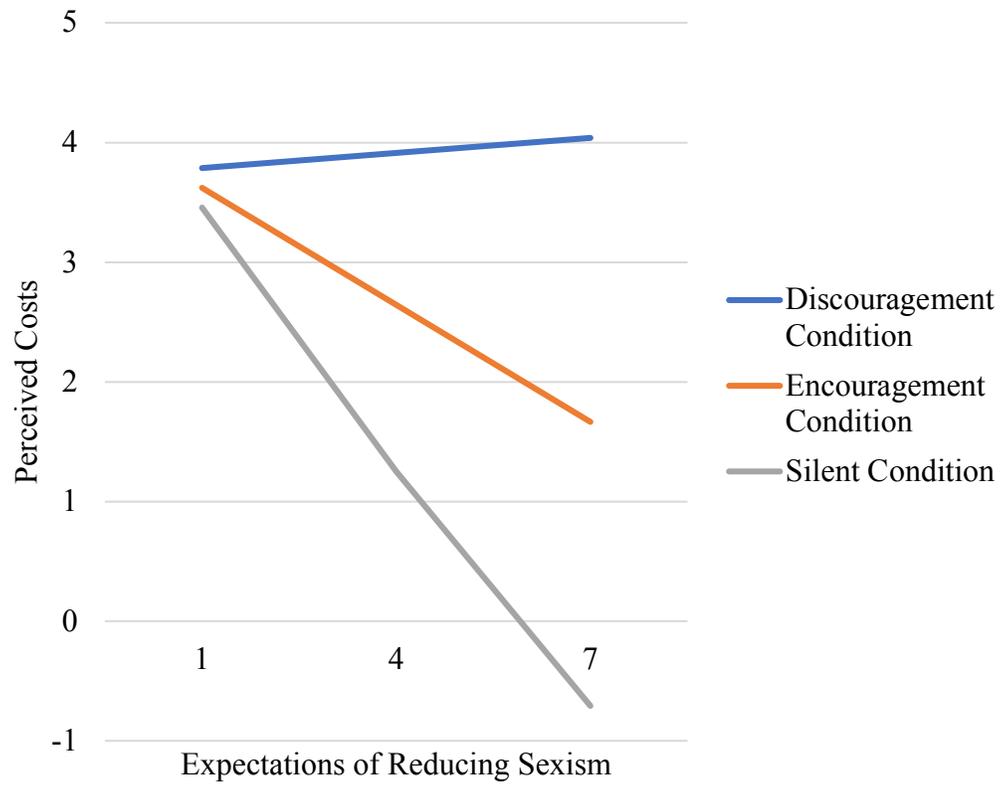


Figure 4. Expectations of reducing sexism as a moderator of the effect of bystander feedback on perceived interpersonal costs, $p = .014$.

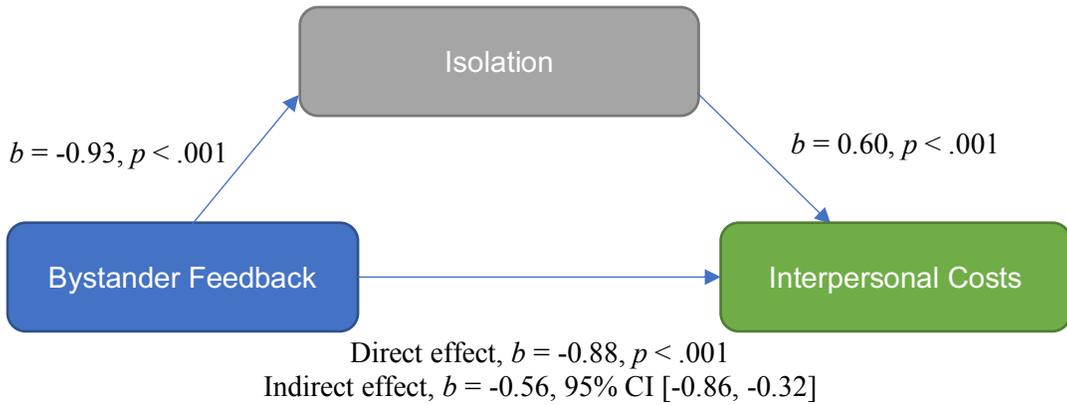


Figure 5. Simple mediation model where isolation mediates the effect of bystander feedback on interpersonal costs (Study 2, $N = 237$; 5,000 resamples).

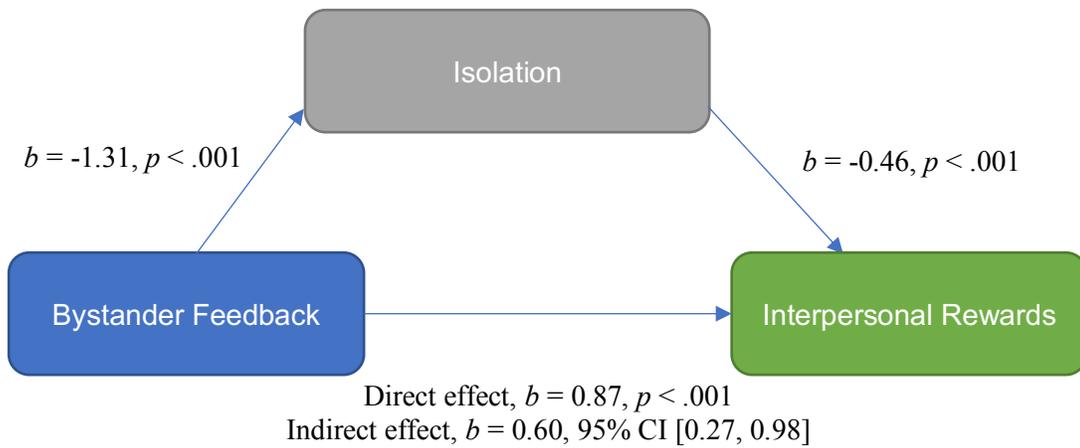


Figure 6. Simple mediation model where isolation mediates the effect of bystander feedback on interpersonal rewards (Study 2, $N = 234$; 5,000 resamples).

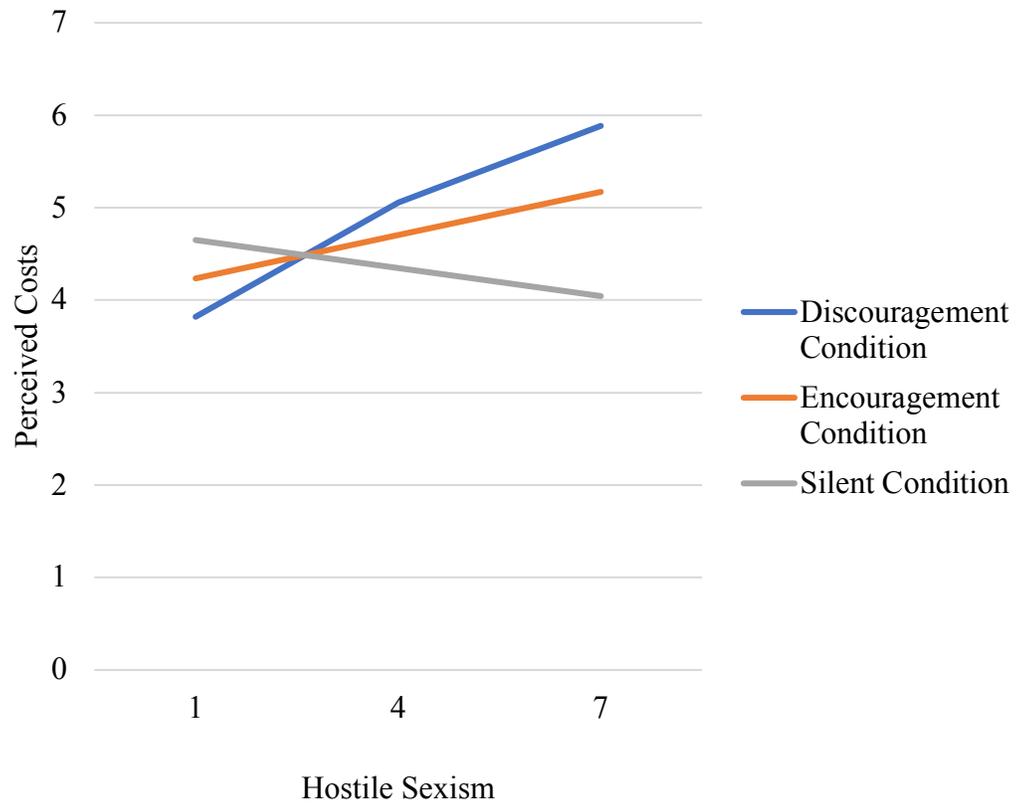


Figure 7. Hostile sexism as a moderator of the effect of bystander feedback on perceived interpersonal costs, $p = .024$.

Means and Standard Deviations for Participants

Variables	Encouraging		Discouraging		Silent	
	Condition		Condition		Condition	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Intentions to	4.47	1.60	4.25	1.55	4.46	1.61
Confront in the						
Future						
Isolation	2.54	1.44	3.66	1.86	4.08	1.79
Interpersonal	2.59	1.22	4.29	1.34	4.09	1.67
Costs in Regards						
to Katie						
Interpersonal	5.24	1.23	3.89	1.42	3.56	1.42
Rewards in						
Regards to Katie						

Table 1. Dependent variables for Study 1.

*Correlations Between Interpersonal Costs, Interpersonal Rewards,
Condition, and Isolation (Study 1)*

Variable	1	2	3
1. Costs	—		
2. Condition	-.472**	—	
3. Isolation (z-score)	.313**	-.347**	—

Table 2. Correlation matrix of variables used in mediation analyses. **Denotes significance at the .01 level.

Means and Standard Deviations for Participants

Variables	Encouraging		Discouraging		Silent	
	Condition		Condition		Condition	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Intentions to	5.12	1.64	4.68	1.53	4.98	1.38
Confront in the						
Future						
Isolation	2.56	1.52	4.19	1.83	4.34	1.54
Interpersonal	2.63	1.54	4.29	1.47	3.84	1.37
Costs in Regards						
to Katie						
Interpersonal	5.23	1.35	3.54	1.40	3.99	1.27
Rewards in						
Regards to Katie						

Table 3. Dependent variables for Study 2.

*Correlations Between Interpersonal Costs, Interpersonal Rewards,
Condition, and Isolation (Study 2)*

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Costs	—			
2. Rewards	-.480**	—		
3. Condition	-.421**	.460**	—	
4. Isolation (z-score)	.483**	-.273**	-.441**	—

Table 4. Correlation matrix of variables used in mediation analyses for Study 2.

**Denotes significance at the .01 level.

Appendix

Study 1

**Items within each measure were randomized. The order of measures was randomized with the exception of the Expectations of Reducing Sexism scale and Intentions to Confront in the Future scale which were presented after the other measures.*

Interpersonal Costs Associated with Katie (rated [1] Not At All to [7] Very Much)

1. To what extent do you think Katie sees you as a troublemaker?
2. To what extent do you think Katie sees you as a hypersensitive?
3. To what extent do you think Katie sees you as a complainer?
4. To what extent do you think Katie sees you as irritating?
5. To what extent do you think Katie sees you as argumentative?

Interpersonal Rewards Associated with Katie (rated [1] Not At All to [7] Very Much)

1. To what extent do you think Katie sees you as brave?
2. To what extent do you think Katie sees you as strong?
3. To what extent do you think Katie sees you as authentic?
4. To what extent do you think Katie sees you as being true to yourself?

Isolation (rated [1] Not At All to [7] Very Much)

1. How isolated would you feel after this interaction?

Intentions to Confront in the Future (rated [1] Not At All to [7] Very Much)

When one confronts another person, they express to this individual that they find their behavior offensive or unwelcome. Please consider this definition when answering the following questions.

1. How likely is it that you would confront someone like John in the future?
2. How likely is it that you would confront someone like John in public in the future?
3. How likely is it that you would confront someone like John in private in the future?
4. How likely is it that you would report someone like John to his or her boss in the future?
5. How likely do you think you would be to confront someone making a sexist joke in the future?

Expectations of Reducing Sexism Scale (Kaiser & Miller, 2003) (rated [1]

Strongly Disagree to [5] Strongly Agree)

Rate to what extent you agree with these statements:

1. Confronting people who discriminate against me usually...
2. Helps reduce some of the sexism in our society.
3. Causes them to become aware or recognize that their behavior was sexist.

4. Causes them to change some of their prejudiced attitudes.
5. Helps reduce the prejudice-based hassles that I would otherwise have to deal with.
6. Helps me achieve things that their sexism would otherwise prevent me from obtaining.
7. Makes things better for women as a whole.
8. Helps educate sexists about why their behavior is wrong.
9. Makes them behave less sexist in the future.
10. Let's the discriminator know that sexism is unacceptable.

Feminist Identification

Do you consider yourself a feminist?

Yes

No

If neither yes nor no, please explain.

Study 2

In addition to measures used in Study 1.

The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick & Fiske, 1996)

*The items below measure hostile sexism.

Below is a series of statements concerning men and women and their

relationships in contemporary society. Please indicate the degree to which you

agree or disagree with each statement using the following scale: 0 = disagree strongly; 1 = disagree somewhat; 2 = disagree slightly; 3 = agree slightly; 4 = agree somewhat; 5 = agree strongly.

1. Many women are actually seeking special favors, such as hiring policies that favor them over men, under the guise of asking for "equality."
2. Most women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist.
3. Women are too easily offended.
4. Feminists are not seeking for women to have more power than men. (RS)
5. Most women fail to appreciate fully all that men do for them.
6. Women seek to gain power by getting control over men.
7. Women exaggerate problems they have at work.
8. Once a woman gets a man to commit to her, she usually tries to put him on a tight leash.
9. When women lose to men in a fair competition, they typically complain about being discriminated against.
10. There are actually very few women who get a kick out of teasing men by seeming sexually available and then refusing male advances. (RS)
11. Feminists are making entirely reasonable demands of men. (RS)

Implicit Theories of Personality (Dewick, 2000)

Read each sentence below and then circle the one number that shows how much you agree with it. There are no right or wrong answers.

1 = strongly agree; 2 = agree; 3 = mostly agree; 4 = mostly disagree; 5 = disagree; 6 = strongly disagree

1. People can't really change what kind of personality they have. Some people have a good personality and some don't and they can't change much. (RS)
2. Someone's personality is a part of them and they can't change very much. (RS)
3. A person can do things to get people to like them, but they can't change their real personality. (RS)
4. No matter who somebody is and how they act, they can always change their ways.
5. Anybody can change their personality a lot.
6. People can always change their personality.

Intentions to Confront Sexism in the Future (rated [1] Not At All to [7] Very Much)

6. How likely is it that you would say something to someone like John who offends you in the future?
7. How likely is it that you would say something to someone like John who is being sexist in the future?
8. How likely is it that you would speak up to someone like John who is being sexist in the future?
9. How likely is it that you would speak up to someone like John who

offends you in the future?

10. How likely is it that you would say something to someone like John in public (when others are around) in the future?

11. How likely is it that you would say something to someone like John in private (when others are not around) in the future?

Isolation (rated [1] Not At All to [7] Very Much)

*some items adapted from Russell, Cutrona, Rose, and Yurko (1984).

1. How isolated would you feel after this interaction?
2. How “in tune” would you feel with Katie?
3. How alone would you feel after this interaction?
4. How abandoned would you feel after this interaction?
5. To what extent is Katie someone you feel you could talk to?
6. To what extent is Katie someone you might turn to when in need?

Thought Listing

The following vignette is the same scenario you were asked to imagine previously:

Imagine that you are hanging out in the break room with your co-workers, John and Katie. John tells the following joke: ‘What do you call a woman with half a brain? Gifted.’ After John finishes telling the joke, you respond, ‘That’s not funny, John. It’s kind of sexist. Right, Katie?’”

1. How else might you have responded? (open-ended)
2. What would you have liked Katie to do or say? (open-ended)

3. If you would not respond “That’s not funny, John. It’s kind of sexist,”
what would you have done or said? (open-ended)

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