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## Allies against Sexism: The Role of Men in Confronting Sexism

**Benjamin J. Drury and Cheryl R. Kaiser\***

*University of Washington*

*This article reviews the small but emerging literature on men who become allies against sexism. Although men are less likely than women to recognize sexism, male allies possess psychological belief systems that allow them to overcome barriers to seeing sexism and thus recognize the unfair treatment of women. We review research demonstrating that relative to women who confront sexism, men who act as allies are evaluated more positively, while their confrontations are taken as more serious and legitimate efforts to combat sexism. We discuss the implications of this research, including a discussion of how individuals and organizations can encourage men to become allies. We also identify how women can take advantage of the insights gleaned from men's confrontations to become more effective when they confront sexism.*

Consider recent actions by two politicians. The first campaigned for women to have equal representation in the government and pursued equal pay for women in the workplace. The second made campaign promises to reduce the gender gap in pay and used the first bill signing as a new leader to enact a law making it easier for women to recoup wages lost as a result of sexism. These politicians share something in common; they are both men (the first is French President Francois Hollande and the second is U.S. President Barack Obama). In advocating on behalf of women, Hollande and Obama each took on the role of an *ally*, or someone who aligns with a disadvantaged group by recognizing the need for further progress in the fight for equal rights. Allies work alongside a disadvantaged group in the search for justice. In this article, we explore the role of men who become allies by confronting sexism. We examine factors that lead men to take on the ally role and explore the effectiveness of men in this role. We also offer suggestions

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\*Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Cheryl R. Kaiser, Department of Psychology, University of Washington, Seattle, WA 98195. Tel: (206)-616-1435 [e-mail: ckaiser@uw.edu].

for the development of research on male allies and provide recommendations for incorporating men in the reduction of sexism.

### **Antecedents of Men Becoming Allies**

#### *Recognizing Sexism*

One way that men can become allies against sexism is by taking an active role in confronting sexism. Confrontation involves directly expressing disapproval for a sexist act to the perpetrator of sexism (Kaiser & Miller, 2004). In order to confront prejudice, it is critical that a potential confronter first recognize an action as discriminatory (Ashburn-Nardo, Morris, & Goodwin, 2008; Stangor et al., 2003). Thus, to become an ally, men must first be aware of sexism against women.

However, the odds are against men taking on the ally role, as men on average have more trouble identifying sexism than do women. For instance, in one study, women and men kept daily diaries of all incidents they experienced in which women were treated differently than men because of their gender (Swim, Hyers, Cohen, & Ferguson, 2001). Despite explicit instructions to attend to differential gender treatment, men reported fewer incidents of sexism than women reported. In another study, men and women rated the extent to which derogatory statements about women (e.g., claims that women are intellectually inferior to men) were prejudiced (Rodin, Price, Bryson, & Sanchez, 1990). Despite the overt nature of the discriminatory statements included in this study, men were again less likely than women to label the statements as sexist. Indeed, across 83 legal and psychological studies on perceptions of potentially sexually harassing behaviors, a small but reliable gender difference emerges (Blumenthal, 1998). On average, men are less likely than women to recognize the unfair treatment of women.

Men's reticence to acknowledge sexism is not limited only to interpersonal slights perpetrated by a single actor, but also extends to institutional forms of discrimination, such as employment practices that disadvantage women. Blodorn, O'Brien, and Kordys (2012) gave men and women a legal brief adapted from an actual lawsuit in which a female plaintiff successfully accused the Dial Corporation of using unfair hiring practices that had a disparate impact on women (i.e., a job screening that required applicants to perform physical acts beyond the practical requirements of the position). Men and women were equally likely to believe the case met preconditions to be considered discrimination. However, playing the role of jurors in this case, men were less likely than women to find in favor of the female plaintiff and awarded a smaller sum of money to her than did women. As such, men were less likely than women to believe the incident of sexism was severe enough to warrant being taken seriously. This research supports the notion that men may be unlikely to act as allies, as they simply fail to recognize the severity of both individual and institutional sexism when it occurs.

Men's difficulty in detecting discrimination and recognizing its severity may be particularly likely to emerge when sexism manifests subtly. To test this possibility, Becker and Swim (2011) provided men and women with a list of common sexist behaviors that included both traditional, blatant sexist acts (e.g., overt statements that women are not as good at certain tasks as men), as well as subtler sexist acts (e.g., paternalistic behaviors, such as men being protective of women) that may be more easily overlooked as forms of sexism. Participants tracked their observations of these behaviors in diaries. While men recorded in their diaries as many observations of such acts as women, they were less willing to say that those acts were sexist. These men were particularly less likely than women to label benevolent acts as sexist, suggesting less sensitivity to forms of sexism that are not explicitly and overtly negative (see also Gervais, Hillard, & Vescio, 2010, for evidence that men struggle in identifying subtle versus blatant sexism).

Men's difficulty in identifying subtle sexism is particularly problematic, as modern expressions of bias often manifest subtly (Glick & Fiske, 1996). This type of sexism, while seemingly gentler than its blatant counterpart, has substantial negative consequences for women. Subtle sexism has been shown to contribute toward maintaining gender inequality (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005), increasing women's complacency with the unequal status quo (Jost & Kay, 2005), decreasing collective action (Becker & Wright, 2011; Ellemers & Barreto, 2009), and, for women with low self-esteem, increasing negative self-directed emotions, self-concern, and self-stereotyping (i.e., relative to women with high self-esteem and those faced with unambiguous sexism; Cihangir, Barreto, & Ellemers, 2010). Despite these negative consequences for women, subtle forms of sexism often are not viewed as harmful. Instead, these acts are construed as prosocial behaviors and welcome expressions of positivity toward women (Glick & Fiske, 1996).

Faced with benevolent sexism, men may focus on the subjectively positive treatment of women and fail to note how such behaviors are condescending, restricting, and unfair to women. It is difficult for men to condemn perpetrators of these benevolent acts, as they may seem more likeable than those who undertake old-fashioned forms of sexism (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005). Men even prefer women who passively accept benevolently sexist offers for help than those women who challenge the nature of these offers (Becker, Glick, Ilic, & Bohner, 2011). This lack of sensitivity to the array of behaviors that comprise sexism suggests men may often fail to fulfill their potential as allies against sexism.

### *Factors That Promote Men Becoming Allies*

However, just as women differ in their sensitivity to sexism (Kaiser, Vick, & Major, 2006; Major, Quinton, & McCoy, 2002a; Stangor, Sechrist, & Swim, 1999), so too do men. Although the studies outlined above show that men, on average, have difficulty detecting sexism, male allies are somehow different than

other men. Male allies are able to overcome the barriers experienced by other men, and recognize as sexist the behaviors and statements that they choose to challenge. What factors contribute to allies' heightened sensitivity to sexism?

*Rejection of legitimizing beliefs.* Individual differences in the endorsement of legitimizing belief systems may be one source of variability in predicting whether men act as allies. Legitimizing beliefs, such as Social Dominance Orientation (i.e., the preference for hierarchical social order; Lee, Pratto, & Johnson, 2011; Sidanius & Pratto, 2001), the belief in individual mobility (i.e., the belief that all individuals, irrespective of group membership, can rise to the top of the hierarchy through individual effort; Major et al., 2002b), and the Protestant Work Ethic (i.e., the idea that hard work is rewarded; Katz & Hass, 1988), locate the causes of people's life outcomes within their individual effort and achievements. People who endorse legitimizing beliefs tend to believe that high status groups have earned their position in the social hierarchy whereas low status groups have simply not worked hard enough to rise in the hierarchy (Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004; Major et al., 2002b). In contrast, people who reject legitimizing beliefs understand status differences as a product of structural systems and biases that restrict low status group members' opportunities and access to resources (Major et al., 2002b). Thus, individual differences in endorsement of legitimizing beliefs differentiate whether people rationalize or resist group-based inequality in society (Jost et al., 2004; Major et al., 2002b).

For high status group members, including men, there is a strong motivation to justify their high status by endorsing legitimizing beliefs (Lee et al., 2011). Perceiving the social order as legitimate allows men to enjoy the comforts of the psychological and material benefits that are afforded to high status groups (Jost et al., 2004; Kleugel & Smith, 1896). Recognizing sexism would involve acknowledging that the status hierarchy is unfair and that the advantages it provides to men as a group are undeserved (Major et al., 2002b). Indeed, one reason why members of high status groups tend not to acknowledge discrimination to the same extent as members of low status groups is because doing so would undermine the apparent deservingness of their high status (Adams, Tormala, & O'Brien, 2006). As, all else being equal, men more so than women believe that men's high status is earned (Lee et al., 2011; Sidanius & Pratto, 2001), men are less likely than women to acknowledge structural factors that contribute to status differences and will likely fail to acknowledge sexism.

Allies, on the other hand, may reject status-legitimizing beliefs and instead endorse status-delegitimizing beliefs that allow them to recognize the unfairness inherent in the current status quo (Major, Kaiser, O'Brien, & McCoy, 2007; Sidanius & Pratto, 2001). The more individuals reject status-legitimizing beliefs, the more likely they are to acknowledge discrimination against low status groups, including women (Kaiser & Major, 2006; Major et al., 2002b; Major & Kaiser,

2005). For example, Major et al. (2002b) demonstrated that to the extent that men rejected the notion of individual mobility, they were more likely to recognize that a fellow male's favorable behaviors toward them relative to a woman (i.e., choosing them for a leadership position over a female candidate) represented a form of discrimination. Thus, men who reject status-legitimizing ideologies may be more likely to see sexism directed at women compared to men who embrace such ideologies.

In the context of perceiving sexism, feminism is the status delegitimizing ideology that has been examined most frequently. Feminism involves ideologies that disavow sexist beliefs and strive to establish equal rights for women (Swim et al., 2001). Swim et al. (2001) demonstrated that men who endorsed feminist beliefs were more aware of sexism. Specifically, the more men recognized that society is biased toward supporting a patriarchy, the more incidents of sexism they reported (see also Hyers, 2007). Similarly, the more men reject modern sexist beliefs that propagate this hierarchy, the more they reject the use of sexist language and acknowledge the problematic ramifications of subtle sexism (Swim, Mallett, & Stangor, 2004).

There may also be certain groups of men who are more likely to reject legitimizing beliefs and thus act as allies. For example, men who experience unfair treatment as a result of another social identity (e.g., race, sexual orientation, etc.) may be more attuned to differential treatment of groups and thus more likely to reject legitimizing beliefs. As such, these men may be more willing to acknowledge sexism. Future research should examine how men's intersecting identities might influence their willingness to undertake the role of allies.

*Relationship orientation.* Relationship orientation, a set of beliefs characterized by social responsibility and the motivation to be helpful and considerate of others (Gervais et al., 2010), is another factor that may contribute to the development of an ally identity. In a study by Gervais et al. (2010), the more men endorsed relationship orientation as self-characteristic, the more likely they were to perceive a sexist statement made by a man as unacceptable. During an online conversation, male participants interviewed another man who stated that men were superior to women at a work-related task. The extent to which male participants were more relationally oriented predicted their greater willingness to declare that the man's sexist statement was inappropriate and problematic. Although the men in this study did not specifically describe these behaviors as sexist, their willingness to draw attention to the negative nature of these statements and send this criticism directly to the interviewee suggests that relationally oriented men may be more attuned to the offensiveness of sexist acts than are other men. This study suggests that men who are particularly concerned with the well-being of others may also be willing to ally with women to fight unfair treatment.

*Allies and Confrontation*

Even when men perceive sexism, these perceptions will not always result in confrontations (Stangor et al., 2003). Despite people's desire to confront sexism, their actions can be inhibited by the costs they experience when they do confront, such as being derogated and viewed as complainers or troublemakers (Shelton & Stewart, 2004; Swim & Hyers, 1999; Woodzicka & LaFrance, 2001). As most research on confronting sexism has examined women's confrontations, we do not know about when or if men who perceive sexism will confront, nor how their confrontations are perceived. We review emerging research on this topic below.

*Allies and the Costs of Confrontation*

Research on men's confrontations of sexism against women suggests that men experience fewer costs of confronting than do women. In one study (Eliezer & Major, 2012), male and female participants read about a man or a woman who either expressed sympathy for a female coworker who failed to get funding for a project or claimed that her lack of funding was the result of sexism. Both men and women who confronted sexism were seen as complainers to a greater extent than their male and female counterparts who did not confront sexism. However, men who confronted sexism were less likely to be perceived as complainers than women who confronted. This result suggests that men's confrontations are perceived more positively than the exact same confrontation delivered by women. Other research also suggests that allies, in general, incur fewer negative reactions when they draw attention to prejudice than do members of the targeted group who take the very same actions (Rasinski & Czopp, 2010). As such, male allies likely face fewer negative consequences for taking a stand against sexism than do women.

In addition to experiencing fewer negative consequences than women who confront sexism, allies may also be perceived as acting more legitimately or appropriately when they confront sexism compared to women who engage in the same action. People who observe confrontations of discrimination generally attribute confrontations to the confronter's undesirable personality traits, rather than the perpetrator's actions, even when prejudice is blatant (Kaiser & Miller, 2001, 2003). This dismissal of discrimination is particularly pronounced in situations involving sexism, as men and women perceive sexism as less serious than racism (Czopp, Monteith, & Mark, 2006; Rasinski & Czopp, 2010). However, emerging research on Whites who oppose racism suggests that allies' confrontations may be viewed as more appropriate condemnations of prejudice compared to the same actions taken by members of the group targeted by discrimination (Czopp et al., 2006; Rasinski & Czopp, 2010).

We are currently exploring whether the greater legitimacy afforded to allies who confront discrimination also occurs in the context of sexism. Our work

suggests that observers (in particular, male observers) take men who confront sexism more seriously than women who confront sexism (Drury, 2013). In one study, men and women read about either a male or female confronter who challenged a male's sexism (i.e., a male teacher ignoring his female students in favor of male students). Overall, male participants tended to believe that male confronters were more credible than female confronters. Further, male participants believed the perpetrator's actions were more sexist when a male confronted than when a female confronted. Thus, men believed the confrontation to be more warranted when undertaken by a male than when undertaken by a female. Responses by female participants, on the other hand, were unaffected by confronter gender. As such, the greater legitimacy afforded ally confronters seems to extend to sexism confrontations, but only for male observers. Although subsequent studies in this project did not individually replicate this effect statistically, across seven studies testing the hypothesis among high status groups (e.g., men), allies' confrontations were perceived as more legitimate than those made by targets of prejudice, with an overall meta-analytic  $d$  of .34, which was statistically significant. As antisexist acts aim to help improve women's status, it makes sense that women may see antisexist actions by both men and women as warranted responses to bias. But why did male participants support men who confronted sexism more than women who engaged in the same act? These studies suggest that, in the context of sexism, it is because male allies are more effective than women in drawing the attention of other males to sexism.

### *What Makes Men's Confrontations Effective?*

In our research, men may have viewed allies who confronted as more legitimate than women because confronting sexism seems not to directly benefit men. People tend to act in alignment with their group's best interests (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Such self-interested acts tend to be less persuasive than acts that run counter to one's interests (Eagly, Wood, & Chaiken, 1978). As the reduction of sexism is generally seen to benefit women, women who confront may be thought to be acting out of self-interest (see Czopp et al., 2006; Eliezer & Major, 2012). Indeed, the more women are perceived to be trying to benefit their gender group, the more negatively and dismissively people react to their confrontations (Roy, Weibust, & Miller, 2009).

Male allies, on the other hand, face no such assumption about acting out of self-interest, as their group is unlikely to be seen as the beneficiary of their actions. Men may instead actually be seen as having something to lose by disrupting bias, given the advantages gained by higher status groups as a result of social inequalities. As men's sexism confrontations run counter to group-based expectations (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), they may thus be surprising. Indeed, observers are more surprised when a male confronts sexism relative to a female who confronts (Gervais &

Hillard, 2014). This reaction may be important in getting people to notice a sexist act, as surprising arguments grab attention and lead people to process the details of the argument closely (Petty, Fleming, Priester, & Feinstein, 2001). The surprising nature of arguing in favor of outgroup interest should thus lead others to pay closer attention to the argument and, to the extent that a man makes a sound argument when confronting, observers should become more aware of the sexist nature of a confronted act. As such, men's confrontations may draw attention to the situation—the biased act—as opposed to men's personal attributes (e.g., assumptions that the confronter is a chronic complainer). Thus, men are more likely to find the antisexist claims of a fellow man more convincing than those made by a woman.

One caveat here is that if a male ally is perceived also to be a member of another disadvantaged group, he may be taken less seriously than other male allies. That is, if a male ally is perceived to be self-interested in reducing *discrimination in general* (i.e., not just sexism), his argument may not be surprising and may not be seen as counter to his interests. This possibility remains an empirical question, as research in this area has not focused on the intersecting identities of male confronters, instead focusing largely on confrontation by White men, primarily among American college students. It may be that some male allies do not have the advantage of being seen as selfless in opposing sexism, and in turn, may not have the privilege of being taken seriously when they confront sexism.

The benefits that some men experience in confronting sexism may spread beyond drawing attention to a single perpetrator to actually changing beliefs about the acceptability of sexist acts. Research on confronting racism and homophobia demonstrates that when allies assertively confront overtly racist or heterosexist comments, people react more negatively to the perpetrator of those comments than when his actions go unchallenged (Dickter, Kittel, & Gyurovski, 2012). As others come to increasingly recognize the unacceptable nature of the comments as a result of allies' confrontations, they too may be more likely to confront such comments in the future, as witnessing confrontations can empower people to confront similar experiences (Swim & Thomas, 2006). By influencing a single person's attitudes in this way, confrontation may have a snowball effect and reach more people. Antiprejudice attitudes spread through social networks, shifting the norms around the acceptability of prejudice (Stangor, Sechrist, & Jost, 2001). As such, by publicly opposing sexism, men may be especially able to decrease the perceived acceptability of sexist behavior, while also encouraging others to take action against such acts.

Further, given the real and substantial costs that can cause women to self-silence rather than confront sexism, men's confrontations can help create environments in which women experience fewer costs when they confront. If, for example, a male employee confronts sexism in the workplace, his actions may



change norms about sexism, making it more likely that women will speak out and be taken seriously when they observe future sexism in that environment.

### *Increasing Men's Willingness to Confront Sexism*

The body of research on male allies against sexism reveals an ironic paradox. Compared to women, it is difficult for men to detect sexism; however, when they do detect and confront sexism, men experience more positive reactions from others and their actions are taken more seriously as appropriate condemnations of sexism. We next address this paradox and explore strategies for increasing men's willingness to confront sexism.

### **Increasing Men's Sensitivity to Sexism**

One major contribution toward encouraging males to become allies will involve making men more sensitive to detecting sexism. Given the particular ambiguity surrounding subtle sexism, changing men's beliefs about the prevalence and nature of subtle sexism is imperative. One key may be to teach men about the illegitimacy of their favorable position in society. By encouraging men to reject status-legitimizing beliefs (Swim et al., 2001; Swim et al., 2004; Hyers, 2007) and recognize the pervasive and harmful nature of sexism (Becker & Swim, 2012), more men will likely come to acknowledge sexism. One way to approach this matter is to have men reflect on their privileged position in society (Case, Hensley, & Anderson, 2014). In an intervention in which men wrote reflectively about privilege and listened to a video in which men discussed how privilege benefited their lives, men reduced their support for modern forms of sexism. Such interventions may be especially effective if combined with efforts to increase men's openness to the potential threats posed by acknowledging sexism. Acknowledging the illegitimacy of the system is threatening to many men, so inductions of self-affirmation, for instance, can be used to alleviate this threat and increase their receptivity toward the message that sexism continues to pose pervasive barriers for women (Kahn, Barreto, Kaiser, & Rego, 2014).

### *Increasing Men's Willingness to Act against Sexism*

To become an ally, men must do more than recognize sexism; they must take action against it by confronting perpetrators of sexism (Stangor et al., 2003). While it is important that men distinguish between fighting alongside women to support their cause and engaging in benevolent sexism by acting unilaterally on women's behalf (i.e., acting as a "knight in shining armor"; discussed below), steps can be taken to increase men's willingness to engage in these sexism reduction efforts. Ashburn-Nardo and colleagues (2008) argue that interventions based upon the

bystander helping model (Latané & Darley, 1970) may be particularly relevant with respect to confrontation. For example, men could be taught about existing barriers that prevent both women and men from confronting sexism (Shelton & Stewart, 2004; Swim & Hyers, 1999; Woodzicka & LaFrance, 2001). Special emphasis should be placed on the power of situational barriers in which a power-discrepancy might further inhibit women from confronting sexism (Ashburn-Nardo, Blanchar, Petersson, Morris & Goodwin, 2014), as these are the situations in which allies might be most vital in the fight against sexism. This lesson should decrease the likelihood that men will interpret a lack of confrontational behavior by women as a sign that sexism did not occur, and if it did, that it was not harmful. Learning about barriers to confronting sexism should also help men take more personal responsibility for addressing sexism, a critical component of Ashburn-Nardo and colleagues' (2008) model. Ashburn-Nardo and colleagues (2008) suggest that the more people learn about the bystander effect, the more likely they may be to step up when they encounter future emergency situations, like sexist behaviors.

Organizations can also play a role in increasing men's willingness to confront sexism in the workplace. Organizations often rely on individual victims of sexism to initiate the grievance procedure by voicing complaints about sexist people and acts in the workplace. Proponents of grievance channels, however, make two key errors in judgments. They rely on the erroneous assumption that victims of sexism readily file complaints and also overestimate the efficacy of their grievance channels in reducing sexism (Edelman, Uggem, & Erlanger, 1999; Nielsen & Nelson, 2005). Rather than waiting for women to voice a grievance about sexism, organizations can be encouraged to be more proactive. They might, for example, create environments that encourage everyone, including victims and allies, to report observations of potential sexism so they can be investigated and addressed. Indeed, because sexism can occur in places where women are not witness to it, allies can be important whistleblowers in this process. By educating men about their importance in addressing sexism, men may be more likely to act as allies.

### *Applying Lessons from Allies to Women's Confrontations*

One important caveat in the study of allies is the balance between men working alongside women to confront sexism versus men working on behalf of women, with the later broaching the territory of paternalistic helping and benevolent sexism. Although seemingly positive on the surface, paternalistic helping can be condescending and threatening to its supposed beneficiaries (Becker et al., 2011). Further, if men act too quickly or without regard for a targeted woman's predicament, they may make things worse or take away her choice to deal with sexism in a way she sees as most appropriate. Here, we emphasize the need for men to work *alongside* women in fighting sexism, rather than fighting this issue on their behalf. That is, we encourage men to be *part of the solution* and recognize that

allying with women does not mean taking over this fight, but instead cooperating in an ongoing effort to attain equality.

Although getting more men involved in antisexist action is a valuable pursuit, there is also a great deal of value in working toward creating strategies that make men more receptive to women's confrontations. This goal may be achieved, in part, by providing women with some of the tools that benefit men when they confront sexism. Indeed, recent work on confronting has begun to identify strategies that targets of prejudice can employ to increase their effectiveness with members of the perpetrating group (Stone, Whitehead, Schmader, & Focella, 2011).

For example, to overcome perceptions of self-interest, female confronters could draw attention to the broader benefits of prejudice reduction. That is, rather than drawing attention to their personal stock in the outcomes of their actions, women can work to educate perpetrators and observers alike on the ways that equality benefits everyone, rather than only women. Take, for example, Meg Whitman, who was herself the target of sexism during her failed campaign for Governor of California in 2010. In confronting sexist statements by a member of her opponent's team during a live debate, Whitman declared the statements sexist and unacceptable, but added that, "the people of California . . . deserve better than slurs and personal attacks" (Frank, 2010, October 13). Rather than just criticizing the staff member's sexist language, Whitman instead drew attention to how eliminating sexism would be broadly beneficial to her constituents. We suggest that these strategies can help women gain the legitimacy granted to men who confront. In our own work, we have begun exploring the idea of confronting for the greater good (Drury, 2013). Here, we seek to understand if phrasing confrontations in a way that explains how organizations or populations as a whole will benefit from prejudice reduction might increase women's confrontational legitimacy relative to standard confrontations. Indeed, in our studies, women are taken just as seriously as men when employing this strategy. Such efforts may aid in changing the perceived social acceptability of sexism.

### *Needed Research*

The emerging research on the role of allies in confronting sexism has yet to explore issues of intersectionality with respect to men who confront sexism. The majority of research in this area has examined male allies who are presumably young, White, and heterosexual. It would be valuable for researchers to expand their understanding of the male ally and to consider the role of emergent categories in these confrontations.

Allies who possess intersecting identities may be more or less successful in opposing sexism depending on whether their particular intersection of identities offers advantage or disadvantage during confrontation (see Warner, 2008). For example, a gay Black male ally might enter a sexism confrontation perceived as

a victim of similar circumstance, due to assumptions about his experiences with prejudice in the form of homophobia or racism. Thus, this ally may be seen as self-interested in confronting prejudice and may be less effective in his effort than an ally who is not seen as a victim of prejudice in other salient domains. The focus on straight White male allies thus is not representative of allies more broadly, as this particular subset of allies enters confrontations from a relative position of privilege. Straight White male allies should not be assumed to be a norm and the identity of this group should not be allowed to remain invisible within this body of research. Thus, explicit consideration must be given to how findings based on this population may not be generalizable to other ally populations.

Exactly how intersecting identities play out during confrontation remains an empirical and theoretical question. Researchers can start by addressing why they choose to represent certain identities in their research, while ignoring others. In doing so, researchers can acknowledge the inability to fully generalize this knowledge to other groups while also opening a dialogue in regards to which other identities might be most important to consider in seeking to understand the effectiveness of allies (see Warner, 2008). Researchers should also take into consideration the important identities that might emerge as a result of confrontation. That is, how might a male ally be viewed differently as a result of his actions? Might he be seen as more liberal or feminist than a nonconfronter? Might male allies also be seen as less masculine than other men? This approach would allow researchers not just to consider the effectiveness of various groups of male allies, but also the interpersonal risks and rewards of confrontation for different groups of men.

The extant research on allies also tends to rely upon the responses of White, heterosexual, educated, Western young adults as a convenience sample (i.e., U.S. and European college students). However, sexism and confrontation have different meanings in different contexts. Understanding the reactions of young middle-class America should not be assumed to represent the reactions of other American populations, much less the reactions that might be observed in cultures in which gender roles are more strongly endorsed or defined along different lines. Some cultures may be less tolerant of sexism confrontation regardless of who confronts, while others may be more receptive to certain approaches to confrontation by allies. Again, these possibilities remain empirical and theoretical questions. To gain a more nuanced understanding of reactions to allies who confront sexism, researchers should seek access to more diverse populations in replicating and extending this work to other cultures, contexts, and populations.

## Conclusion

Research on the role of male allies in confronting sexism is just emerging, and our review provides context for the development of this research. Our review

suggests that, on average, men are less likely than women to detect sexism against women. However, some men, such as those who reject legitimizing beliefs and who endorse a communal relationship orientation are more sensitive than other men at detecting sexism. Additionally and ironically, despite the difficulty many men experience in noticing sexism, they are particularly effective when they do speak up about sexism. Compared to women, men who confront sexism are taken more seriously, they are less likely to experience social costs such as being derogated, and their confrontations are more persuasive in convincing others (especially other men) that sexism exists. We identify strategies that both individuals and organizations can employ to encourage men to take a more active role in combating sexism. Further, we provide examples of how insights from men's effectiveness in confronting sexism can be used to strengthen women's sexism confrontations. As psychological research on confronting sexism develops, it will be important to further explore how allies can most effectively participate in preventing and reducing sexism.

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**BENJAMIN J. DRURY** received his PhD in social psychology from the University of Washington in 2013. He is now a researcher at Google in Seattle, WA.

**CHERYL R. KAISER** is an Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of Washington, where she directs the Social Identity Laboratory. Her research interests include prejudice, diversity, identity, and the self. She is also interested in the application of this research for law and policy. Her research program has received support from the National Institute of Mental Health, the National Science Foundation, The Russell Sage Foundation, and the James McKeen Cattell Fund sabbatical award.